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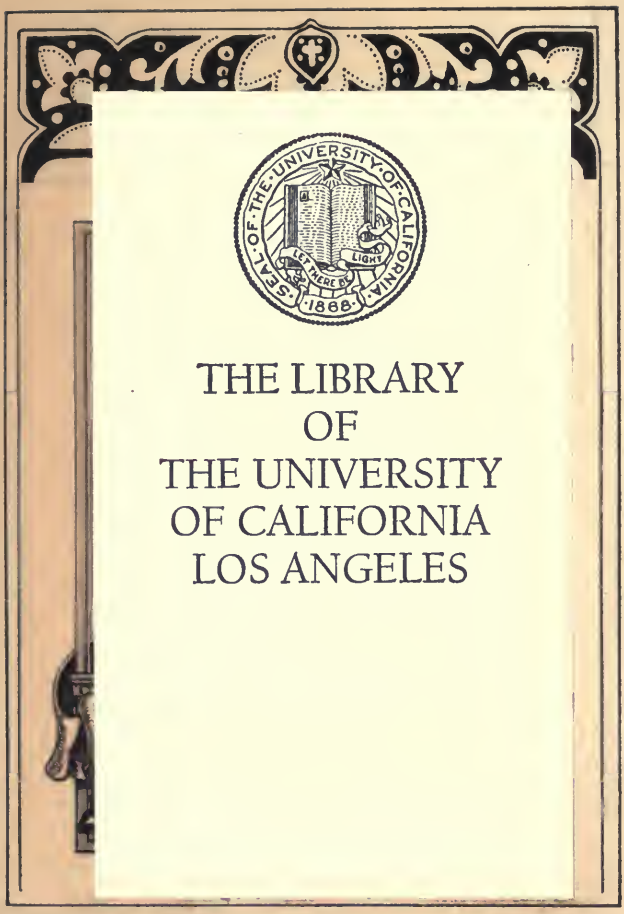

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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a Critical Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

MY NEIGHBOR RAYMOND

Translated into English by

EDITH MARY NORRIS

VOLUME I

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

BOSTON LONDON PARIS

"Don't whip her so much, you will have an accident."

ORIGINAL ETCHING BY LOUIS MEYNELL.

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CHAPTER I

The Grisette

On a certain Saturday evening, in a now distant period of my existence it chanced that I was walking on the boulevards.

I was alone and I was very deeply absorbed in thought. In fact, I may as well confess that, contrary to my usual custom, for I am of a mercurial temperament, I was making some rather curious reflections on the world and its inhabitants, and having pondered these interesting enigmas by a natural transition I passed to the still less soluble ones of the soul and thought, chance, fate, destiny.

Having, for the time being, exhausted these topics, I believe I was even about to take as the subject of my further cogitations the moon, which was beginning to show herself, and I already saw in her luminous surface, mountains, lakes and forests — for with a little fertility and readiness of imagination one may see in that silvery orb anything that one wishes — when, as I walked pensively along, looking up into the air, I collided suddenly with some one who was coming towards me and whom I had not perceived in the moon.

"Why don't you take care, monsieur?—you are very awkward," said a low, sweet voice, which anger even had not deprived of its charm.

I have always had a weakness for agreeable voices, and quickly descending from the ethereal regions, whither I had mounted only for lack of something better to do, I looked at the person who had addressed me. It was a young girl of from sixteen to eighteen years of age, who was attired in a little cap tied under the chin and a neat gown of cotton print, as well as a modest apron of black bombazine—all of which gave her the appearance of a little working girl who was coming from her day's work and returning home. Quickly I looked at her face; my word, it was charming—eyes lively and mischievous, a small nose, beautiful teeth, black hair, an agreeable expression of countenance and a certain grace of bearing. I must confess that I had seen nothing so charming in the moon.

The young girl held under her arm a cardboard box, against which I had hustled without meaning to do so; she was retying the ribbon which held it and appeared fearful lest its contents had suffered from my awkwardness. I hastened to excuse myself to her.

"Really, mademoiselle, I am distressed. It was very awkward of me."

"Certainly, monsieur, if you had been looking before you this would not have happened."

"I haven't hurt you, have I?"

"Hurt me?—oh, no! only I am afraid that my flowers may be crushed; but I can remedy that when I get into the house."

"Good!" I said to myself, "she's a flower-maker, and as these damsels are not generally Lucretias let's see if there isn't some way of opening an acquaintance with her." The young girl had put her box under her arm again and was resuming her way. I walked beside her, saying nothing yet. I had always been rather awkward in commencing gallant conversations; happily when once started they go of themselves. However, I would risk some words from time to time.

"Mademoiselle, you walk very fast, will you not take my arm? I shall be delighted to escort you. Will you not allow me to see you again? Do you go often to the play? I can offer you some tickets. Take care now, you are going to slip"; and other little things of the same kind, phrases in general use in nocturnal encounters, to all of which I obtained as the only replies,—

"Yes, monsieur; no monsieur; leave me, I beg of you. You are losing your time. Do not follow me."

Sometimes she neglected to answer me altogether, she made a gesture of impatience, she crossed to the other side of the boulevard, but I crossed also, and after some moments of silence

I risked a new sentence, giving the most tender and sentimental inflection to my voice.

I was beginning, however, to perceive that my new acquaintance was more unsociable than I had at first thought, and that I was likely to have my pains for my trouble so far as my little phrases and oglings were concerned. However, this resistance added fuel to my flame; I had been very foolish one evening when I thought I had met a young and innocent girl, whom I had followed for some time, and at her door my belle had invited me to go up with her; but I beg my readers to believe that I had been careful not to go up. In Paris, however, appearances are so deceitful, the most knowing persons allow themselves to be taken in; I ought to have some knowledge of the world for I have seen much of it, notwithstanding which I often allow myself to be taken in still.

These reflections occurred to me as I was following my gentle flower-maker. She was making me walk a deuced long way. We had passed along the Boulevards Montmartre, Poissonière, Bonne-Nouvelle; we had gone by the little theatres; come, she must live in the Marais, I see that. She turned down the Rue Charlot, the Rue de Bretagne, the old Rue du Temple. Happily, the weather was fine; besides, she must stop eventually! Yes, and she would doubtless shut the door in my face; but what did that matter to me?

After all I had nothing better to do, had not known what to do, indeed, and suddenly I had found an aim for my walk. And in truth that is within reach of everybody, for it is extremely easy to find occupation in Paris in following the first pretty little irregular face one sees. I know, moreover, many persons who do nothing else and who neglect their business to do so. In particular I have met a great number of government clerks who, instead of keeping to their work, are continually running after the grisettes under the pretext of going out to buy a penny roll with which to regale themselves; it is true they go forth on these quests hatless, which is very reassuring to the administration, as it is always thus certain that its clerks are not entirely lost.

But it is not for me to censure the conduct of others, which would be making a very bad use of my time, since I am by way of setting a bad example; I who was just now making reflections on the mutability of human affairs and am now pursuing a little petticoat worn by one whom nature has created at once the most fragile, the most delicate, the most deceitful, and also the most seductive, the most enchanting, the most attractive of beings. I had lost myself, my imagination was working, although I had only seen a foot, very tiny in truth, and the merest glimpse of a leg, modestly encased in a black woollen stocking. Ah, if I could but have seen the garter! My word, giving every-

thing due consideration, it is much better worth while to follow a young girl, though one should have a door shut in one's face, than to gaze questioningly into the moon and to rack one's head with thoughts on metaphysics, astronomy, physiology, and even on metoposcopy. The more one loses one's self in hazy abstractions the less one perceives the aim and proof of things; but in occupying one's self with a pretty-faced little girl one learns at once the secret of magnetic attraction, and with a fine woman one easily discovers the whole system of the universe and the entire workings of nature.

For some minutes I had said nothing to my little flower-maker. I was piqued by her obstinate refusal to have anything to say to me, and I had even retarded my steps in order that she might think that I was no longer following her. But although I kept at a distance of twenty paces I did not lose sight of her. She stopped, I stopped also. She spoke to some one, I advanced. This some one was a young man. I bit my lips, but I endeavored to catch some words, and I heard the following dialogue,—

"Good-day, Mademoiselle Caroline."

"Good-day, M. Jules."

"You are late in getting home."

"We are overcrowded with work, especially on Saturday; and then I had a box to carry to the Rue Richelieu, that is what kept me."

"And what have you in the box you are now carrying?"

"A pretty bunch of roses to put on my cap to-morrow. I made it myself, and it is very elegant. An awkward man pushed against me on the boulevard and almost made me drop it on the ground."

Here I hid myself in an alley before which I had stopped.

"There are some people who are not at all careful where they are walking."

"I think that the one who pushed against me must have been a savant; he was looking at the sky."

"I hope he at least asked you to excuse him?"

"Oh, yes. But I must leave you; my aunt is expecting me, she will scold me."

"I should be sorry to be the cause of anything so disagreeable to you. I shall see you again to-morrow?"

"Yes, yes, unless my aunt doesn't want me to go to dance again; she is so contrary. You have tickets for Tivoli?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, for four. I shall come and call for you."

"Come early, M. Jules."

"Oh, be sure of that; and don't forget that we must dance the first contra-dance together."

"Oh, I never forget such a thing as that."

"Good-by, Mademoiselle Caroline."

"Good-by, M. Jules."

M. Jules drew nearer to the young girl, who offered her cheek. I heard a kiss. Hang it!

The young man went off singing. The girl went on a few steps farther, then she turned into an alley, and closed the door after her; I remained motionless beside the gutter. This M. Jules was a lover. Tomorrow, Sunday, they were going to Tivoli; with the aunt, no doubt, since he had tickets for four.

"Come, decidedly," thought I, "I shall have my pains for my trouble. Well, it will not be the first time. It is a pity, for she is very pleasing, very pleasing indeed. Let's take a good look at the house. One never knows what may happen. Why, what the devil! take care what you are doing there, you just missed throwing that on me!"

Some one who lived in my belle's house had opened her window and emptied a jar into the street at the precise moment that I was fixing the color of the wall upon my memory. Happily I escaped with a few splashes, but the circumstance put an end to my curiosity, and I left the Rue des Rosiers, wiping the tails of my coat with my handkerchief as I went.

CHAPTER II

The "Petite-Maîtresse."

It was as yet quite early in the evening when I debouched upon the boulevards, after my adventure in the Rue des Rosiers, feeling, I must confess it, a little mortified at my lack of success. The performances were not yet over in the smaller theatres, and a dozen noisy pass dealers came rushing towards me to offer me the checks[1] they had for sale.

"There is one whole act yet to be played, monsieur," they shouted vociferously in my ears; "and it's by far the finest one too. You'll see the celebrated fight with swords and battleaxes; there's also a fire scene, and the ballet is very fine. This play is drawing every one in Paris, you will find that it is the best thing out. Won't you buy a check, monsieur?"

Unable to resist these pressing solicitations I bought a check with which I could go to any part of the theatre I chose. However, the ushers would not allow me to enter anything but the pit, or

[1] It was still the custom in Paris, when Paul de Kock wrote "My Neighbor Raymond," to carry on, outside the theatres, a traffic in pass-out checks, the prices ranging from one to twelve or more sous.

circulate outside behind the pit tier. I did the latter; I always find it convenient enough to see an act from there, besides, what is going on in the hall is often more amusing than that which is taking place on the stage. I am very fond of studying faces, and there are so many droll ones present at a melodrama. These theatres are in general frequented by the lower classes and by a middle class who do not know how to hide their sensations and who, consequently, give themselves freely to the expression of all that they feel during a scene of love or remorse.

"Oh, the puppy! the villain!" said the man next to me every time that the tyrant appeared. "He'll get his deserts in a little while."

I looked at my neighbor, I judged from his appearance and from his hands that he was a tanner; his eyes were more animated than those of the actor who was playing the traitor, against whom he was vociferating at every turn. In front of me, in the sixth tier, I noticed a washerwoman who sobbed as she listened to the story of the princess's misfortunes, and a little boy who hid himself under a bench in order that he might not see the combat. "How amusing these people are," I said to myself, "the play has not lost its attraction for them; they are entirely taken up with the action, they are not losing a word, and for a week they will think of what they have seen this evening. Let's go up to the dress circle;

they have more repose of manner there, though they are apt to be bored by the performance."

Through a pane in one of the boxes I perceived a very striking face. I gave a piece of money to the attendant and went into this box, decided to do my best to make up for the time I had lost in following Mademoiselle Caroline. The lady who had seemed charming to me through the pane was less so when seen close by, however, she was pleasing; she was showy, elegant, and had a good figure, she was still young, and I could see already that she was very coquettish and that the arrival of a young man in the box distracted her for a moment from the performance. You must know, reader, that I am a young man; I believe I have not told you that before. Later on I shall show you what I am, what talents I possess, what tastes and what qualities, nor shall I tarry long in doing so.

A gentleman was seated beside the lady; he had an ordinary face, was very refined in his dress, and had distinguished manners. Was he the lady's husband? I was tempted to believe that he was, for he hardly spoke to her. It was a great pity that we had only a part of an act to see. I might have talked, done the amiable, clinched our acquaintance. It seemed to me that I was not distasteful to her, for she threw some very sweet glances at me, being placed in such a manner as to be able to look at me without the gentleman

perceiving her. Those ladies have a clever way of doing this, a habit of it; ah, if I ever marry I shall always place myself behind my wife, because then — yes, but if anyone was seated beside her could I prevent their feet or their knees from communicating? This is very embarrassing.

"This play is not so bad," said the lady at last to her neighbor; "they don't act badly here."

"Yes, yes," and nothing but "yes"; ah, he must necessarily be her husband, there was no doubt of that, and she was talking at me.

"I was very much bored yesterday at the Français; Mars did not play. Why shouldn't we go tomorrow to the opera, there is an extraordinary performance there."

"Just as you like."

"In fact, it's too warm to enjoy the play. If if were not crowded on Sunday in the public gardens I should prefer to go there to shutting myself up thus. What do you think of it?"

"Oh, it is indifferent to me."

The lady made an impatient motion; the gentleman did not seem to perceive it and advanced toward the front of the box. I rose to look at the decorations and my hand came by chance against the lady's arm, who was not at all disturbed thereat.

"These theatres are so badly ventilated, there is always such a disagreeable smell," said my neighbor after a moment.

I then remembered the tails of my coat which, in fact, did not exhale an odor of violets. I could not restrain a smile, but I instantly offered her a smelling-bottle; she accepted it, and on returning it to me she did not appear at all offended upon my squeezing the hand in which she gave it to me. At this moment the play ended.

"Devil take it," repeated I to myself, "it's a pity; I came too late and Mademoiselle Caroline is the cause of it. What am I talking about, but for her I should still be on the Boulevard Montmartre looking at the stars; it was because I followed her that I came in here to see them act, and it was in running after a grisette that I came to meet this "petite-maîtresse," who perhaps is not so good as the grisette. How things are entwined. It was because someone threw something on my coat that this lady complained of the smell, and I gave her my smelling-bottle and squeezed her hand. Will anyone say after that that there is no such thing as destiny. Certainly if I have anything to do with this gentleman's wife it will be Mademoiselle Caroline's fault, for she would not listen to me. We went out, I helped this lady to step over the benches which could not be moved for the convenience of the public, but the husband took her arm and I was forced to follow behind, Shall I follow them or shall I not, such was the reflection that I made in going down the staircase.

After that which had transpired a short time

previously I ought to have kept quiet for the rest of the evening, but I was twenty-four years old and I loved women passionately; besides, my last mistress had just proved unfaithful to me. It was really that which had plunged me into those melancholy reflections. The young man who has a great amount of sensibility cannot live without having a love affair on hand, and that decidedly was my case.

Hardly were they on the boulevard when they walked toward the causeway. "Good," I said to myself, "they are going to take a cab, I shall listen to what they say to the cabman, and by that means I shall get the address without troubling myself further."

But it appeared that I was mistaken in my conjectures; they went towards a pretty equipage and called "Andre." The footman came running, opened the door and assisted monsieur and madame to get in. This piqued my self-love still further. A lady who had a carriage. This was a conquest about which it was worth while to take some trouble. Come, let's follow madame's carriage. Not on foot, that would be too fatiguing; it is not as if she were in a cab,—to follow these carriage horses would give me a hemorrhage of the lungs. Ah, I see a cab that will do for me; come, let's hurry, for the carriage is about to start.

"Hello, cabby!"

"Get in, monsieur."

"All right."

"Where do you want to go to?"

"Follow this carriage which is just starting before us and you shall have something to drink in addition to your fare."

The rascal had no need of that, for I perceived that he was already tipsy. I should have liked then to have taken another cab, but there was no longer time to make the change. He whipped his emaciated horse with all his might, the cursed beast galloped in desperation and passed in front of the carriage.

"Take care," said I to my driver, "don't whip her so much; you will have an accident."

"Don't be frightened, boss, I know my trade. You must understand that I haven't been a cabby for twenty years without knowing how to drive. You were with some friends who were in the green carriage over there, well, I want you to get there before they do."

"But I didn't tell you that I was with some one, I asked you to follow that carriage; if you have passed it, how can you follow it?"

"I tell you, boss, that they are going to follow us. I am going to let them see that my horse is worth two of theirs; when Bélotte once gets going there is no way of stopping her."

"Hang it, you are going too quick; we have passed the carriage. Where is it now?"

"Why, they are trying to catch up with us, the

coachman is as angry as he can be. I told you I should lead him a good chase."

"But stop, I tell you; why don't you stop."

"Have we got there, then?"

"Why, yes, we are there."

"Why, mercy, you see Bélotte got started, and I told you she went well. Ho, ho, here you are, master; where must I knock?"

"Nowhere."

"Ha! ha! here's no more of a carriage than I could put under my hand. Didn't I tell you that we should get there before the others? Ah, I had it in my mind that we should pass everybody."

I alighted from the cab and looked far and near. No carriage; we had lost it. I was enraged and still I had to listen to the boasts of my drunkard, who demanded something to drink. I was tempted to break his whip over his back, but I contained myself and took a shorter method, which was to pay him and send him away.

"When you want a good cabby and a good beast, master, you see I'm the man for your money. You will always find me on the Place Taitbout, near Torchoni's, in the best part of the city; you ask for François, I am known as well as the clown."

"That's good, I shall remember it."

The rascal departed at length, leaving me alone in a street which I did not know. However, as

it was getting late, and as I had no desire to pass the night in walking about, I tried to get my bearings. After walking for some time I found myself in a place that I recognized. I was on the Rue de Martyrs, near the Barrier Montmartre. Happily, I lived in the Rue Saint-Florentin, and to get there I had only to walk downhill. I therefore set myself to walk downhill, making my reflections as I went; I had a fitting subject for them, and I had plenty of time to make them. However, my reverie was again disturbed by shouts. As the neighborhood of the Porcherons is not frequented by very choice society, and as I did not feel any desire to seek a third adventure by way of the Grand-Salon, I doubled my pace to avoid vexatious encounters.

But the noise continued, they shouted, they swore, they fought; the women called the guard, the police commissioner, and all the justices of the neighborhood; the men pushed and thumped and rolled in the gutter. People opened the windows and showed themselves in cotton nightcaps and gowns; they listened, they laughed, they talked from one window to another, they demanded reciprocally what was the matter; but they did not come down, because it was not prudent for them to get mixed up in a dispute at night. The sight of open windows and the faces surmounted by nightcaps recalled to me my little accident on the Rue des Rosiers. I no longer walked, I flew,

already believing that I must be pursued by a fatality, but somebody was also running beside me. I turned down a street to the right; I heard some one following me and, stopping at length to take breath, they immediately caught up with me and seized me by the arm.

CHAPTER III

The Flower-Girl

"Save me, my good monsieur!" cried an agitated voice at my ear. "I beg, I entreat you to save me; to take me away from this place! Oh, monsieur, as you are a gentleman, protect me from that villanous Beauvisage who has declared that he will most certainly carry me off in spite of everyone. Did you hear how he was flogging Cadet Finemouche, who is, however, a mischievous fellow and richly deserves a sound drubbing. My sister was much cleverer and quicker than I, she managed to get away as soon as they came to blows, but she left me there to bear the brunt of it all and perhaps went to make an incendiary account of it to my mother. She will try to throw all the blame on me I know, for she has done it before, and my mother will believe her. You are my only hope, and if you won't protect me, monsieur, I don't know what I shall do; I am indeed a lost girl."

While the person who had stopped me was relating her tale of woe, interrupting herself only to wipe away the tears which were streaming from her eyes, I scrutinized her and tried by the dim light of

a street lamp to distinguish her features. Her language and her dress plainly showed me with whom I had to deal; a loose red gown or wrapper confined at the waist by a black velvet belt, a round cap with a wide border of lace, a colored kerchief crossed over her breast and tied at the back, over which hung a big cross; this time I was not afraid of being mistaken, I saw clearly that she who stood before me was one of those who vend various commodities which are carried in flat baskets, or whose shop was established near the Charniers des Innocents.

I wanted at least to see if she were pretty; why, yes, really, she was passably so; her eyes, although they were full of tears, had a candid expression which rendered her quite interesting; her little pout, her look of grief were sometimes tempered by a smile at me; and this smile, that a coquette would hardly have known how to exhibit so agreeably, showed me two rows of very white teeth, which enamel, coral, and scented toothpowders had not yet spoiled.

However, despite the pleasing appearance of my new acquaintance, I hesitated greatly as to whether I should retain her arm, which was passed under mine. To be sure, with such pretty features, she could not be a vender of fish or meat. She must be a flower-girl, I would answer for that; but I hardly desired a flower-girl as an acquaintance, though it is allowable of course, if an occasion pre-

sents itself, to allow one's self to follow a caprice, a fancy. But I had had no luck this evening, and I did not wish to tempt fortune further; I must get rid of this young girl.

I therefore disengaged as gently as possible the arm which was passed beneath mine, and assuming a very frigid expression I said to the young lady,—

"I am extremely sorry that I cannot accommodate you, but I do not know you. The quarrels of M. Beauvisage with Cadet Finemouche are not within my province. Your sister has escaped; do the same yourself. Let your mother think what she likes, it's all the same to me; it is past midnight, I have been walking about the streets long enough, I want to go to bed."

"What, monsieur, you refuse to help me; you are going to leave me here. You are unwilling to go out of your way to render a service to a poor girl who is in trouble because of an accident which might happen to anybody. I repeat to you that my mother is quite capable of refusing to open the door to me if I go home without a witness who can affirm my innocence."

"And you want me to affirm it, do you?"

"Mercy! will that scorch your mouth? Besides, you are a fine gentleman, you are somebody in the great world; she dare not put herself in a passion before you, and she will therefore listen to me. But if I go alone how she will go on!

O Lord, Lord ! how unlucky I am ; I didn't want to go into that Grand-Salon, I had my doubts about it."

Here the tears, the moans, began again, and mingled with them were stampings of the feet: and perhaps she would tear her hair — that would be a pity, for it suited that little, innocent, frank face. I have not a heart of stone ; I felt moved by the despair of this young girl, and I said to myself,—

" If she had a silk or even a merino gown in place of a wrapper, and if instead of this round cap she had a pretty hat, and if in place of this gilt cross a pretty locket hung at her neck, I should have hastened to offer my services to her long ere this. I should have been gallant and amiable, I should have grovelled before her to get her to listen to me, and I should have regarded permission to offer my arm as a high favor; and now a simple matter of dress renders me hard, unfeeling, and I refuse to render a slight service to one who asks it with tears. Come, that would be bad, too bad ! I have followed a grisette and a fine lady, who, perhaps, are neither of them as worthy as this poor girl, I have passed my evening in foolish trifling, I can well spare an hour for a good action. That is decided, I shall escort this flower-girl."

You see, reader, there is good in me sometimes ; it is true that this young girl was very pleasing to me. All women are pleasing to you, you were

going to say. Yes, reader, all those who are pretty, and I am ready to wager that the same is true of you.

I drew near to my beautiful fugitive. She was seated against a post, holding a corner of her apron to her eyes ; she was sobbing.

" Mademoiselle — "

" Mon-monsieur — "

" What is your name ? "

" Ni-i-cette, monsieur."

" Come, now, my little Nicette, be comforted ; don't cry any more and — take my arm again. I am going to take you to your mother."

" Re-really ? "

She jumped with joy ; I thought she was even going to hug me, but she contented herself with taking my arm and squeezing it tightly within her own as she said to me,—

" Oh, I was sure you could not think of leaving me in such an embarrassing position. I am a virtuous girl, monsieur ; everybody in the neighborhood will tell you that Nicette has a reputation as clear as water from a rock. But my mother is so bad-tempered — and then my sister is jealous because she says I make eyes at Finemouche."

" You can tell me about that on the way. Where are we going ? "

" Oh, mercy ! only a little way, my stall is at the Croix-Rouge, and I live in the Rue Saint-Marguerite, where my mother sells fruit."

From the Faubourg Montmartre to the Croix-Rouge; it was enough to kill one. If one could only meet a cab. I think I should have willingly got into François' cab, at the risk of seeing Bélotte take the bit between her teeth, but we did not pass a single vehicle. So I bravely took the bull by the horns, or rather clasped Nicette's arm tightly in mine, and set off walking at a double pace.

"So you are a dealer, Nicette, and what do you sell?"

"Bunches of flowers, monsieur, and they are always fresh, I boast myself."

She was a flower-seller, I had been sure of it. That fact restored my courage, and somehow caused the distance of the way to diminish. I should not have felt at all flattered to find I was squiring a fishwoman; however, when it is a question of rendering a service ought one to stick at such trifles? But what will you have? — this devilish self-respect is always making itself felt. Besides, I'm no better than anybody else — perhaps not so good — you can judge for yourselves as to that.

"Oh, you sell bouquets?"

"Yes, monsieur, and when you want a good one come to see me; I shall always have one at your service, night or day."

"I thank you. But how happens it that living in the Faubourg Saint-Germain you go to dance

near the Barrier Montmartre? It seems to me you might find balls in your own neighborhood."

"I'll explain how that came about. My sister has a lover, Finemouche by name, a brewer's journeyman, a dark, handsome fellow,—all the girls of the neighborhood are wild over him. My mother, who says he's a wild rake, doesn't want Fanchon to listen to him; but Fanchon sticks to him and she tries now and again to be with Finemouche upon condition that he doesn't ask her to go anywhere that's not respectable. This morning she consented to go to walk in the dusk of the evening to Montmartre, for the sentimental purpose of drinking milk; but they were obliged to take me, for my mother would not have let her go out alone. We pretended that we were going to see an aunt who sells oranges on the boulevard. That was one of Fanchon's fibs. I went with them against my will, the more so because Finemouche had been casting sheep's eyes at me, to which I did not respond, as I am an honest girl. When we got to Montmartre there was the brewer, who gallantly treated us both to a donkey ride. After a couple of hours of riding about I said we must turn our trotters towards the maternal roof. But Finemouche said, 'Let's rest for a quarter of an hour at the Grand-Salon, just time enough to eat a salad, and try a waltz.' I didn't want to accept, but my sister likes waltzing and she likes salad; so I had to give in to her. Well, we went into

the Grand-Salon; Fanchon danced with Finemouche; up to that everything went well. But at this point it chanced that Beauvisage, a pork-butcher's assistant of our street, arrived. He's another young fellow who talks nonsense to all the girls, and he thinks he's in love with me."

"It seems to me, Nicette, that you don't lack adorers."

"I have them the same as the rest of the girls, but it's not my fault; God knows I don't receive them with open arms. But these men, the more one repulses them the more stubborn they become. I've told M. Beauvisage, however, that all his smirks and smiles are displeasing to me; I throw all his presents in his face. Oh, well! it's all the same, if I leave my place for a moment so sure am I on my return to find a sausage among my roses and a pig's foot on my foot-stove; the other day if he didn't come to wish me many happy returns of the day with a white pudding — with truffles in it too. But all those things don't touch my heart in the least. I told him that I wouldn't have him; before all the gossips in the neighborhood I sent his pudding flying in his face. He went off furious, swearing he would abduct me. You may well understand that on seeing him come into the Grand-Salon I shivered with fear, all the more so because I know he is headstrong. Will you believe, monsieur, he asked me to dance as if nothing had happened. I refused him point blank,

because I'm not two-faced, and he wanted to drag me by force; Finemouche came running and he ordered Beauvisage to leave go of me at once, upon which the latter pulled me still harder. The Cadet pushed him so hard that they went out to fight. My sister Fanchon blamed me because she was angry at seeing her sweetheart fighting for me. It was all the worse because Finemouche, who had drunk a good deal with his salad, was beaten by Beauvisage. Fanchon escaped when she saw her lover stretched out on the pavement. I wanted to do the same, but my admirer ran after me. At last I saw you, and that gave me courage; I felt sure you would protect me, I seized your arm — and that is all."

Nicette's story had amused me, and what pleased me most of all was the fact that she appeared virtuous and had no lovers. You are going to say to me, "What did that matter to you? — since you are a young man of good society you will not pay court to a flower-girl." That is correct, I had no intention of doing so: however, for some moments past I had been pressing the young girl's arm most tenderly — but that was in a fit of abstraction.

"Monsieur, do you think my mother will beat me?"

"I don't see why she should be angry! you have done nothing wrong."

"Well, in the first place, we shouldn't have gone to the Grand-Salon."

"That was your sister's fault."

"Oh, yes! but Fanchon will say it was mine. Now, I'm going to tell you — my mother favors Beauvisage a bit, for he feasts her eyes with galantine and never comes to the house without a chitterling that weighs half a pound. My mother is passionately fond of chitterlings, and she wants me to marry the pork-butcher that she may always have a pudding to her hand. But I wouldn't give ear to that, and since then they look crossways at me in the house, and I am sure they'll put all the blame for this quarrel and row on my shoulders. Oh, mon Dieu! I shall be beaten — that's sure."

"Poor Nicette, I promise you that I will intercede with your mother for you."

"Oh, pray do, surely no woman could refuse to receive her daughter or could force her to sleep in the street! That rascal Beauvisage, he's brought all this upon me — I'd rather throw myself into the water than be his wife."

"And would you say the same to Finemouche?"

"Yes, monsieur; I want a husband to my taste, and all those cunning fellows don't suit me."

"You haven't a lover, then?"

"No, monsieur."

"Yours is the age for love, however."

"Oh, I'm in no hurry. But we shall soon be there, monsieur, we shall soon be there; oh, how my heart beats."

In fact, I felt that she was trembling; and to

reassure her I took one of her hands and pressed it in mine. She allowed me to do so, for she was only thinking of her mother.

We were in the Rue Sainte-Marguerite. Nicette dared go no further.

"It's there, monsieur," she said to me, "that house on the other side of the carriage entrance."

"Well, let us go up to it."

"Oh, wait another minute; wait till I get my breath."

"What makes you so frightened, am I not here?"

"Oh, mercy, perhaps my mother won't receive you well!"

"We will make her hear reason."

"That will be difficult."

"Your sister is more reprehensible than you."

"Yes, but she loves my sister, and she doesn't love me."

"Still, we didn't come so far to be afraid to make the attempt."

"That is correct, monsieur; come, we will go on."

We were now in front of Madame Jerome's shop, for Nicette had informed me that this was her mother's name. Everything was closed, all was quiet; not a solitary light could be seen inside.

"Does your mother sleep in the shop?"

"Yes, monsieur, at the back."

"We must knock."

"Ah, if my sister should not have come in."

"Still we must knock."

I knocked, for Nicette had not sufficient courage; nobody answered.

"She sleeps very sound," said I to the little girl.

"Oh, no, monsieur, it is that she won't open to me."

"Hang it! she positively must answer."

I knocked again, we heard a noise, some one approached, and a raucous voice demanded,—

"Who's that knocking at this time of night?"

"It's me, mother."

"Oh, it's you, is it?—you shameless, impudent girl—and do you think I'll let you in in the middle of the night after making the men fight and turning the whole neighborhood upside down? Get out of here as quick as you can and don't let me see you again."

"Mother, open the door for me, I beg of you; my sister has deceived you."

"No, no, I know all. You are a cursed pig-headed girl! So you won't be the pork-butcher's wife?—well, then, run the streets; and we'll see if you'll eat sausage every day."

Nicette wept, I thought it was time to interpose in the quarrel.

"Madame," cried I, through the door, in a voice which I tried to render imposing, "your

daughter has done nothing wrong; you are scolding her without reason, and if you leave her in the street you are exposing her to foolish risks."

I expected some answer, but there was none; I heard some one taking off the iron bars as if to open the shop. I went to Nicette,—

"You see," said I, "my voice, my remonstrance, has produced some effect, I was sure I could calm your mother. Come, dry your tears; she is coming. I assure you I shall make her hear reason."

The sounds continued, presently the shop door was opened and Madame Jerome appeared at it in nightgown and nightcap. I drew nearer, to intercede in favor of the little girl, who dared not stir; I was about to commence a phrase which might properly touch a mother's heart — but Madame Jerome did not give me time to do so.

"It's you then," cried she, "who accompanied this impudent girl, and want to meddle with me and point morals and teach me to govern my daughters. Wait, here's something to pay you for your trouble."

At the same moment the fruiterer gave me a slap in the face which made me stagger to the other side of the street, then, going into her shop again, she suddenly shut the door upon us.

CHAPTER IV

My Neighbor Raymond

For several minutes I remained half-stunned and smarting, and I said not a word to Nicette. To tell the strict truth, Madame Jerome's well-applied blow had cooled the ardor of my zeal in behalf of the young girl very considerably. It had the further effect of causing me to reflect at some length on the quickly following and not too pleasant results of my meetings of this eventful evening, and I could not but notice that a mysterious fatality had prevented my success and caused me to pay dearly for all my attempts at promiscuous flirtation.

For having followed a little work-girl, the merest tip of whose finger I had not been permitted so much as to pinch, I had been showered with dirty water in the Rue des Rosiers; for having played the gallant, done the amiable with a petite-maîtress who had darted very tender glances at me, and returned my blandishments in kind, I had found a drunken coachman who had lost me in a neighborhood very distant from my own; and, finally, as a reward for having consented to act as protector and escort to a young, unknown and pretty flower-girl,

and for endeavoring to effect a reconciliation between her and her mother, I had now received a well-aimed and decidedly forcible slap in the face. This latter event appeared to me an extreme injustice of Providence, for in bringing Nicette to Madame Jerome's house I had done a very good action. Who after this will venture to tell me that a good action is never lost? But the heat of my cheek was beginning to abate, and my ill-humor was lessening in proportion. It was not Nicette's fault that I had been slapped, and I must still do my part in consoling the poor little thing whose grief had been greatly increased by this last accident.

"You were right, Nicette; your mother has a wicked temper."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, what did I tell you? I am very sorry it happened to you; but if you had not been there I should have got it along with many others."

"In that case, I see that all is for the best."

"My mother is quick."

"That's true."

"She has a light hand."

"I thought it a very heavy one."

"It is a ready one; if I do but answer her 'yes' or 'no' she slaps me; and above all, since I refused Beauvisage. Oh, I'm very unhappy, for a trifle more I'd take a plunge into the Ourcq canal."

"Come, come, calm yourself. The most pressing thing now is to know where you are to sleep. Have you any relations in this neighborhood?"

"O my God, no — nobody; I have an aunt who lives in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, but she won't take me in, she's too much afraid of making my mother angry."

"I see that Madame Jerome is a general terror."

"Alas, yes."

"Where can you sleep, then?"

"At your house, monsieur, if you will allow me; or failing that, on the pavement."

There was in Nicette's request something so candid or so bold that I could not avoid starting with surprise. One hardly believes in the possession of innocence and candor by a flower-girl. However, her voice had so true a ring, had something so unaccountably persuasive, her eyes were so full of tender feeling, when they were not bathed in tears, and then her little "tip-lilted" nose and the confiding way in which she had taken my arm, and, last but not least, this astonishing proposition that she should spend the night alone with a young man, all threw me into an uncertitude which I tried in vain to formulate.

I must decide this question, however; Nicette was looking at me, she was awaiting my answer, her supplicating eyes were fixed upon me. Heavens! that I should take home to my apartments

a little hawker, whom I had found on the corner of the street to pass the night. And notice, reader, that I dwelt in the Rue Saint-Florentin, near the Tuileries; you may imagine from that that I was pretty much of a dandy. A dandy withal! who follows grisettes in the street? Oh, that was merely to pass the time. I was not fatuous as well as a dandy, I beg you to believe; and if a feeling which I cannot master leads me ever towards the charming sex and makes me forget rank and condition, I shall say in the words of the old song,—

'Twas but the spell of fate that drew me on.

But I am not one of those people who brave all conventions; I did not wish to pass, in the house where I reside, for a young man who scrapes up acquaintances with the first comer, and in my house, as everywhere else, there were many evil tongues. I had especially a certain neighbor—ah!

I must get Nicette in somehow, then, without being seen. It would be easy enough to get in, I hoped. It was at least one o'clock in the morning and my portress would be asleep. In such a case when any one knocked she contented herself by asking from her bed, "Who's there?" then pulling the cord which opens the doors without disturbing herself. Nicette could thus enter without being seen. But tomorrow how could she go forth unobserved. Madame Dupont, my

portress, was curious and gossipy — a portress tells everything. I should have everybody laughing at me, for my adventure would be known all over the house, and would be repeated outside. It was very embarrassing. However, I could not leave Nicette on the pavement. Poor little thing, if the patrol should meet her they would lead her away to the guardhouse like a vagabond, and I believed her to be honest. I almost believed her to be pure and innocent. As to that we shall soon see.

We had crossed the bridges, followed the quays; at length we were approaching our destination. Nicette did not walk so quickly now, she was fatigued by the evening; and what must I have been, I ask you?

"Here it is," I said at last.

"So much the better, for I am very tired."

"And I also, I assure you. I am going to knock."

"Oh, what a fine street; what a beautiful house!"

"Nicette, you must make no noise in going upstairs. You must not speak."

"No, monsieur —don't be uneasy. I shouldn't wish to wake anybody up."

"Hush! they're opening the door."

Madame Dupont had asked who was there, I had answered; we were in the house; the vestibule lamp was extinguished, it was very dark; this suited me.

"Give me your hand," said I in a low tone to

Nicette, "and let me lead you — but above all make no noise."

"All right, monsieur."

I guided her to the staircase, up which we went as softly as possible. However, I wished we were safe in my room. If somebody should open a door I could not hide Nicette; I had not even a cape to put over her; it was summer time. I lived on the fourth floor; for a pretty bachelor's apartment in the Rue Saint-Florentin cost a good round sum even if one lived on the topmost story. On the same landing as myself dwelt also an eccentric personage of from thirty-six to forty years of age, with a face which would have been insignificant had not his pretensions rendered it comic. He was of middle height and extremely desirous of appearing slight in figure, although he was the victim of a daily increasing corpulence; the possession of an income of four thousand livres afforded him a leisure which he occupied in attention to other people's business; he was, moreover, an amateur poet, an amateur painter, an amateur musician; combining all the talents, according to what he said and what he believed. He made himself a laughing-stock to the men, and to the women also in a still greater degree. Nevertheless, he was seen everywhere, was present at every party, ball, and concert, because in society the persons most in demand are the ones who make people laugh, whether it be by their wit or their follies.

We were just stepping on to my landing when M. Raymond suddenly opened his door and appeared before us in his night-shirt, with a handkerchief knotted on his head, carrying in one hand a lamp and in the other a key and a newspaper.

I did not know whether to advance or recede. M. Raymond looked astonished, and Nicette burst into a peal of laughter.

I wished at least that he should not have time to look at the young girl; I fumbled quickly in my pocket, but my key was twisted in my handkerchief. I couldn't put an end to the scene, I could not find the keyhole; the more I hurried the less successful was I, it seemed as though the devil were mixed up in it.

M. Raymond, who saw my embarrassment, drew near to me with a mischievous smile, and held his light right under my nose, as he said,—

"Allow me to light you, neighbor; you can't see what you're doing there — you're quite wide of the keyhole."

I could have passed on to him, with a good heart, the slap in the face which Mère Jerome had given me — but I had to restrain myself; I thanked him, I opened the door, I pushed Nicette before me — I went in; I shut my door again without listening to M. Raymond, who offered to light my candle for me.

But a sudden idea struck me; I took a candle, I reopened my door and ran after Raymond, I

caught him by the tail of his shirt just as he was entering his destination, and put my finger mysteriously on my lips.

"What's the matter?" asked Raymond, withdrawing the tail of his shirt from my grasp.

"Don't tell any one that you saw Agathe with me tonight."

"Er — Agathe — what? Why you must be joking."

"We've come from a masked ball, she disguised herself expressly and —"

"Do you mean to tell me there are masked balls in July?"

"People have them whenever they wish. It was to celebrate a birthday."

"Why this young girl —"

"She's well disguised, isn't she? I'll wager at first sight you didn't recognize her; but the costume and a little rouge changed her altogether."

"My faith, I confess to you I did not find the slightest resemblance."

"I count on your discretion — tomorrow, I'll tell you the reason; you'll laugh at this adventure. Good-night, neighbor, good-night. Permit me now to light my candle."

"With much pleasure, M. Dorsan!"

I left Raymond and went back into my own room. My neighbor was not entirely persuaded that it was Agathe whom he had seen with me that night; but at least by this stratagem I had

reserved to myself an answer to his gossip, and if he talked I could easily persuade people that he was half asleep and saw things differently to what they were.

But, you will say to me, by this falsehood you imperil the reputation of another woman. Who is this Agathe, whom you push so cavalierly into the breach?

This Agathe was my last mistress, the very one with whom I had so lately broken; she was a little milliner, very lively, very enticing, very knowing, and she sometimes did me the pleasure of demanding my hospitality for the night. My neighbor had often seen her going into or coming out of my apartments; in consequence, one time more or less could not injure her. You see, her reputation had nothing to fear.

Now that I have informed you as to the identity of Mademoiselle Agathe, with whom M. Raymond was unaware that I had broken, because he was not my confidant, I will return to Nicette.

CHAPTER V

A Night That Was Long in Passing. Mademoiselle Agathe. A Word About Myself

"How very, very funny he looked, that gentleman," said Nicette, as she saw me coming with the light. "When I saw that comical figure in a nightshirt, with a handkerchief tied in a lover's knot on his head in place of a nightcap, that big nose, and that look of astonishment, I really couldn't keep from laughing."

"I must confess, Mademoiselle Nicette," said I dryly, "that you are giving me a most unconscionable amount of trouble."

"Me, monsieur? Oh, I beg your pardon if I have done so," she said in a tone of dismay. "I did not mean to I'm sure."

"At length, God be thanked, we are in my apartments, though I don't know, in truth, how you will manage to get out of them in the morning," I resumed.

"Mercy, by the door, of course!" answered Nicette. "I shall have to go out by the way I came in."

"Oh, that's very easy for you to say; in fact — well, we shall see tomorrow."

Nicette looked around her; she examined my apartment, my furniture, she followed me into each room. I had but three, a little antechamber, a bedroom and a study, where I worked, read or played upon the piano, or did whatever I thought fit.

"Why don't you rest yourself," said I to Nicette.

"Yes, monsieur; I will just now; but I must—" she looked at my sofa, my ottomans and chairs, she seemed afraid to approach them. I could not help smiling at her embarrassment.

"Doesn't my lodging please you?"

"On the contrary, it pleases me very much, monsieur; but everything is so fine, so glittering, I am afraid of spoiling something."

"Oh, you need not be at all afraid of that."

I led her to the sofa and almost forced her to sit beside me.

"As you see, Nicette, I am alone; you have come to a bachelor's house."

"Oh, that makes no difference to me, monsieur; besides, you know I had no choice."

"You are not afraid, then, to remain under the shelter of my roof for the night."

"No, monsieur, I can see well that you are a good, kind man and that I have nothing to fear in your house."

"Ah, she sees that I am a good, kind man," said I to myself; "then I must be extremely for-

tunate in my physiognomy. I thought I was not bad-looking; some women have even told me I was very good-looking, and I cannot appear very ugly to this little girl or I could not inspire her with so much confidence."

These reflections tormented me not a little, and while making them, I looked at Nicette more attentively than I had been able to do up to the present. She was really very good-looking, she had a face that was at once captivating and gentle, and an expression which bore no resemblance to that one ordinarily sees among flower-girls; she had the freshness and charm of her own flowers, and yet she was the daughter of a fruiterer—of Madame Jerome, of whose quality I had had no very pleasing example. Nature plays many such tricks as this; but it must be confessed that chance had been favorable to me this time. I began to think that I need complain no further about my evening, I forgot the grisette and the "petite-maîtresse," and thought of nothing but the charming face beside me.

While looking at the young girl, I drew nearer to her and softly clasped my arm around her waist; and the more pleasing I found her the more I pressed the red wrapper.

Nicette did not speak, but she seemed to me agitated, her breast rose more frequently, her breathing became shorter, she kept her eyes lowered; suddenly she disengaged herself, arose, and

asked me in a trembling voice where she should pass the night.

This question embarrassed me, I confess that I had not yet given a thought to it. I looked at Nicette; she still kept her beautiful eyes down. Did she fear to meet mine again, did she already love me, and — Come, here was this cursed vanity of mine going at full gallop.

"Nicette, you have plenty of time to think of that. Are you very sleepy?"

"No, monsieur, it is not that."

"Oh, then, there is some other reason."

"I don't want to trouble you; you told me, besides, that you were very tired."

"That's all passed, I don't feel so now."

"But all the same, monsieur, will you not tell me where I am to go? I would rather go into another room, I can be very comfortable on a chair, and—"

"What! — pass the night on a chair; come, you mustn't think of that."

"It will do very well for me, monsieur; I am not difficult to please."

"No matter, I can't consent to that; but won't you sit down again, Nicette? There is no hurry just now. Come, sit down. Are you afraid of being beside me?"

"No, monsieur."

She seated herself, however, at the other end of the sofa. Her blushes, her uneasiness, disclosed to me a part of what she felt. I myself was em-

barrassed. What! with a flower-girl? And it was precisely because she was a flower-girl that I did not know how to get my bearings. I swear to you, reader, that with a fine lady, or a grisette, I should have been much more at my ease.

"Nicette, do you know that you are charming?"

"People have sometimes told me so, monsieur."

"A good many men must have paid court to you."

"There are some who have tried to wheedle me by coming to buy my bouquets, but I don't listen to them."

"Why do you think they want to wheedle you?"

"Oh, because they are fine gentlemen — like you."

"If I were to speak to you of love, what would you think then?"

"That you wanted to make fun of me. Mercy! that would be very plain!"

Here was a beginning that afforded no promise of anything better. No matter, I would continue; and insensibly I drew nearer to the little one.

"I swear to you, Nicette, that I never make fun of anyone."

"All the men say that."

"Besides, you are pretty enough to inspire a passion."

"Yes, a passion that would last a fortnight. Oh, I wouldn't give that house-room."

"Upon my honor, you are too good-looking for a flower-girl."

"Pshaw, you're joking."

"If you wish, Nicette, you can find something better to do than to sell flowers."

"No, monsieur, no; I wish nothing better than to sell bouquets. Oh, I am not idle and vain. I refused Beauvisage, who has money, and who would have dressed me in print wrappers, gleaner's caps, and gilt chains; but all that had no effect on me. When I don't like a person, nothing can make me change my ideas."

She was not, then, one of those women who become attached to one by interest; in order to win her regard it would be necessary to please her. Well, I made up my mind I would try to please her. But, unfortunately, when I wish to be pleasing I do not know what to say. For this reason I remained for ten minutes without saying anything to Nicette and contented myself with heaving big sighs and coughing to reanimate the conversation. Nicette, however, did not put a malicious construction on my silence, or perhaps it was to make game of me that she said,—

"You have a very bad cold, monsieur." Come! I blushed for my foolishness; how could I be so awkward and timid with a little seller of bouquets. I did not recognize myself. And in order to recognize myself I put my arm around Nicette and tried to draw her near me.

"Let me go, monsieur; pray let me go."

"Why, Nicette, what harm are we doing?"

"I don't wish you to put your arm about me like that."

"Give me a kiss and I will let you go."

"Only one; that must be all."

So as she had accorded me permission to kiss her I profited by it; confiding in my promise she allowed me to take this much-desired kiss, and offered me her fresh, rosy cheek, adorned with the bloom of youth and innocence.

But I desired still greater happiness. I wished to pluck from her charming lips a still more delicious kiss. Nicette tried to resist, but it was too late. I took not only one, I took a thousand. How sweet were those kisses that I imprinted on Nicette's lips. Saint-Preux found those of Julie bitter; but I have never felt any bitterness in a pretty woman's kisses; it is true, thanks to heaven! that I am not a Saint-Preux.

Nicette, however, disengaged herself from my arms; she ran towards the door and was already on the landing when I reached her and held her by the skirts.

"Where are you running to, Nicette?"

"I'm going, monsieur."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, monsieur, that I am going; I see very well now that I ought not to stay here all night. I should never have thought that you

would have taken advantage of my trouble and helplessness, but — but I see that I was mistaken, and I'm going away."

"Stop a moment, please; where are you going to?"

"I don't know; but all the same I must go — perhaps I shall be safe in the street."

This inference and reproach were, I felt, deserved by me; though when it is remembered how Nicette had infringed conventionality in asking my hospitality and confiding so freely in a perfect stranger, something may be urged in my justification.

She still held the door to the landing half open, and I in turn clung to her skirt; I looked at Nicette and I saw big tears falling from her eyes. Poor little thing, it was I who had made them flow. She looked prettier than ever, and I was tempted to throw myself at her feet and beg her to forgive me. What! I on my knees before a street hawker! Be easy, dear readers, the convenances will not be wounded to that extent.

"Nicette," said I at length, "please stay."

"No, monsieur, I estimated you wrongly. It is necessary that I should leave here."

"Listen to me. First of all, you cannot leave the house alone; at this hour the portress only opens the door when people give their names."

"Oh, I can remember your name quite well, monsieur; you are called 'Dorsan.'"

"It will not suffice for you to say my name, she will not recognize the voice."

"Well, I will remain in the hall until morning."

"Just so, and everybody will see you — all the gossips in the house and those cackling cooks. It's bad enough already that that cursed Raymond has seen you. Come into my room again, Nicette; I promise you, I swear to you that I will conduct myself properly, and cause you no more pain."

She hesitated, she looked at me; no doubt my eyes clearly expressed that which was passing in my mind, for she closed the door on to the landing, and smiled at me as she said,—

"I believe you, and I will stay."

In my joy I was about to kiss her again, but I restrained myself, and I did well. Vows are so easily broken.

"But, monsieur," she said to me, "we cannot both of us pass the night seated on your big sofa."

"That is soon settled," I said, "you will take possession of my room and occupy my bed; I shall make myself comfortable on the sofa in my study. Come, no objections, mademoiselle, for I won't hear a word of them; I insist upon it. You can double lock your door, and I assure you that you may sleep without fear — there, will that suit you?"

"Yes, monsieur."

We went back to the bedroom, I lit a second

lamp and Nicette helped me to carry the sofa into my study. At length everything was done.

"You may now go to bed," I said, "and sleep as tranquilly as though in your own home. Good-night, Nicette."

"Good-night, monsieur."

I took my candle and went into my study, where I threw myself on the sofa, hoping to go to sleep. Although we sleep away one-third of our lives, yet we are always willing to plunge ourselves into the oblivion of slumber; and we fear death, which is nothing but eternal sleep, during which we surely shall not be troubled with bad dreams.

But sleep I could not, though I turned from side to side. So to quell my restlessness I fell to reflecting on the events of my singularly lively evening. I thought of Caroline, of my beautiful dame, of that confounded drunken cabman — as to Nicette I tried to eliminate her from my thoughts, but she recurred to them incessantly and I could not banish the remembrance that she was only separated from me by a slight partition — and her own will. I wondered if she was sleeping. I was so very restless that I was obliged to get up and walk about, but I stepped very softly lest I should wake her up. Poor child, she had had grief enough for tonight and I feared that yet more lay before her, for if her mother should still refuse to receive her what would she do? Up to the present I had not thought of her future.

"Do you want anything, monsieur?"

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ALBERT DE FORD PITNEY.

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But I had not heard the key turn in the lock, she had not, then, locked herself in; that was singular. She counted on my promise, and it was very imprudent on her part to believe in the promises of a young man. Was she sleeping or was she not? — this was what tormented me. For half an hour I stood beside the door, I turned and returned; I listened, I heard nothing; I looked through the keyhole, there was still a light in her room; was it from precaution, or had she forgotten it? But this door she had not locked, or perhaps she had locked it without my hearing it. It was very easy to assure myself of that. I turned the door-handle very softly, the door opened, I stopped, I feared that I had made some noise, however, I heard nothing; if I could see her for a moment sleeping, see her in bed, in fact, it is there only that one can truly judge of a woman's beauty. I thrust my head forward, a light was placed on the stand at a short distance from the bed. I took a few steps, I held my breath, I approached; she was not undressed, I might have known it. I endeavored to depart as quickly as possible; but my cursed shoes creaked, Nicette awoke; I determined that I would change my shoemaker.

"Do you want anything, monsieur?" she said to me immediately.

"No, yes — in fact, I was looking for a book, but I have found it."

I went quickly back into my study. I must

have looked very foolish; I closed the door and I did not open it again. Oh, how long the night seemed. But day dawned at last.

People were coming and going about the house, but I did not yet dare to awaken Nicette; she was sleeping so soundly, and the previous day had been so stormy a one that rest after it was absolutely necessary. At length I heard her stirring, she was up, she opened my door and came towards me, smiling,—

"Monsieur, will you allow me to kiss you?"

I understood her; this was her recompense for the shelter I had given her for the night. She kissed me heartily, and I began to realize that the feeling that one has nothing with which to reproach himself is a pleasurable one.

"Now, Nicette, let us talk sensibly; but no, let us first have some breakfast, we can talk over everything just as well during our meal. You must need something."

"Yes, monsieur, I shall be very glad to have some breakfast."

"I always have some provisions in the house for unexpected visitors."

"Tell me where everything is, monsieur, and I will lay the table."

"Well, here's the sideboard — in these drawers — "

"All right, all right."

She quickly got all that was necessary, and in

a few moments the cloth was spread, the table laid. I admired Nicette's grace and vivacity; a little maid like that would suit me infinitely better than Madame Dupont, the portress, who now performed my household tasks. By the way, what if Madame Dupont should come in! Oh, we had plenty of time, it was only seven o'clock in the morning, and my portress, knowing that I was rather indolent, never came up before nine; we might, therefore, breakfast at our ease.

"Now for a little conversation, Nicette; after what has transpired you cannot doubt that I am interested in your welfare."

"You have proved that to me, monsieur."

"What do you intend to do when you leave here?"

"I shall go back to my mother's house."

"That is the right thing to do; but supposing she should still refuse to keep you?"

"I shall try to find work; if necessary I will go into a household — I shall be able to find a place somewhere, perhaps."

"Yes, no doubt you will; but who knows what people you will come in contact with, and into whose hands you will fall. Young and pretty as you are, it will be more difficult for you to place yourself well than it would for some others. I know men; they are, almost all of them, libertines, marriage is no restraint to their passions. And wherever you take service you are likely to

receive annoyance from your masters; they will treat you ill if you repulse them."

"Then I shall leave the house, and I shall take a place where there is a lady only."

"Old ladies are very exacting and keep their young servants in prison for fear they should gad about and make undesirable acquaintances. Young ladies receive much company, and are likely to afford you a bad example."

"Why, how virtuously you speak now."

"Don't be astonished at that; a drunkard fully comprehends the seduction of the wine cup; a jockey understands horses, a painter, pictures; a libertine — well, it is precisely because I am not virtuous myself that I can warn you of the dangers you are about to run better than anyone else — experience teaches. I wish to preserve you from future harm; it would not suit me — perhaps it is only conceit on my part, but I feel that it would be painful to me to witness the blighting of a flower which I did not pluck myself. Do you understand me, Nicette?"

"Yes, yes, monsieur, I am not a prude. I quite understand what you mean; but don't be uneasy about that. How could I grant another what I refused to you?"

She spoke with so much feeling, so much sincerity, that I could not doubt that she had found me pleasing.

"In fact, my dear girl, I don't see why you

should not go on selling flowers; that occupation is better suited to you than household service."

"That's true, monsieur, but —"

"I understand you — wait, Nicette, take this purse, — you may accept it without blushing, for it is not the price of your dishonor. It's merely a service I render you — call it a loan if that will suit you better."

"O monsieur, money from a young man — what will they think of me?"

"You need not say from whom you got it."

"A young girl who suddenly becomes possessed of money — people believe — imagine all sorts of things about her."

"Let the gossips say what they please, and deprive them of all grounds for talking by the manner in which you conduct yourself."

"What will mother say?"

"A mother who refuses bread to her child has no longer a right to take her to account for her actions."

"But this sum you are giving me is too much."

"Nay, there's only a hundred crowns in this purse; I won them two days ago at écarté. In fact, Nicette, if you knew how lightly money is lost at play you would give me fewer thanks for that trifle."

"A trifle; a hundred crowns, why one could set one's self up in business with that; why, monsieur, it's a treasure."

"Yes, for you who know the value of money and will put it to a good use; but things vary in value according to how they are placed."

"All of which means that you are very rich."

"No; it means that, brought up in easy circumstances, used to gratify all my fancies, I don't sufficiently realize the value of money. The hundred crowns that I offer you I should lose at play without experiencing the least mortification; you may accept them freely, Nicette, you will return them to me if I should some day have need of them."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, whenever you wish; all that I have shall be at your service."

"I don't doubt it, my dear girl; the matter is settled — done with."

"Yes, monsieur, if my mother sends me away again I shall rent a little room, I shall buy flowers, I shall be economical, methodical, and perhaps I shall have a little shop of my own some day."

"Then you can marry the man of your choice, and be happy forever after."

"Oh, perhaps — but we won't talk of that, monsieur."

"Why, how the time has passed, it will soon be nine o'clock; you must go, Nicette."

"Yes, monsieur, that's true; whenever you like, but I — shall I — "

"What are you trying to say to me?"

"Am I never to see you again?"

"I hope on the contrary, to see you very often.

If you should leave your present neighborhood you can leave your new address with my portress."

"Very well, sir, I won't fail to do so."

The little thing was disturbed; she turned away her eyes to hide her tears from me. Could she be grieved at leaving me? What childish nonsense to suppose such a thing, we had only been acquainted for a few hours; however, I also felt pain in parting from her.

She would doubtless meet some of the servants on the staircase, but what could be done? — there was no other way out. She promised me to go downstairs as quickly as possible, and to hurry through the gateway.

I kissed her tenderly, too tenderly for a man who had given a hundred crowns; it seemed almost like reimbursing myself.

I opened the door on to the landing, I was about to allow Nicette to pass before me. Shouts of laughter made me raise my eyes; that confounded Raymond's door was open, he was there with a young woman, and that young woman was — Agathe!

A perfidious trick, in which I recognized Raymond's curiosity and Agathe's mischief. They were spying upon me, no doubt; perhaps they had been on the watch since daybreak. But how did it come about that Agathe — she had never told me that she knew Raymond. I registered a mental vow that he should pay me for this.

Nicette looked inquiringly at me, trying to learn from my eyes whether she should advance or recede. It would be useless to resort to further subterfuge, it might even be if I hesitated further that M. Raymond would assemble a part of the household on my landing. I pushed Nicette towards the staircase.

"Good-by, M. Dorsan," she said sadly.

"Good-by, good-by, my child, I hope that your mother — I shall see you again; you can't tell — we may — adieu."

I did not know what I was saying, anger, scorn, impeded my speech; but Nicette — who had but one feeling, regret at leaving me — Nicette wiped away with her apron the tears which rolled from her eyes.

"Why this is really sentimental," said Mademoiselle Agathe, looking after the little flower-girl as she went down the staircase. "How is this, sighs, tears? — ha, ha, I shall die of laughing. But I shall be very much obliged, monsieur, if you will inform me how it happens that, without knowing anything about it, I went to a ball with you last night disguised as a flower-girl. Well, come now, speak, why don't you? Can't you understand me?"

I was otherwise engaged. I had my eyes fixed on my neighbor and my look embarrassed him no doubt, for he reddened, wriggled, tried to smile, then went into his room, carefully shutting the door after him.

"Come, M. Raymond, I haven't quite done with you yet; we shall see later on," said I approaching his door. I turned round at length to answer Mademoiselle Agathe, but she had gone into my room and, as she knew its arrangements perfectly, I found her in my study seated on the sofa.

"Why tell me, Eugene, what does all this mean? Mon Dieu, how you've changed things here, how everything is upset — the sofa in the library, the bed has only been slept on outside, the remains of a breakfast. What has taken place during the night?"

"Nothing, I assure you."

"Eugene, my little Eugene, tell me all about it. That you're no longer my lover is no reason that we should not be friends."

You know, reader, that Agathe was the milliner with whom I had just severed a connection because I had discovered that she was unfaithful to me; and the melancholy reflections to which I had been a prey during my walk on the boulevard the evening before had been occasioned by my ill-humor at this fact. But since that time my fickle heart had experienced many new emotions which had altogether effaced Agathe's perfidy, I no longer regretted it — because I had ceased to regret her. I felt she was right to joke me about my grave air, which was not at all suited to our passing acquaintance and which would cause her to think

that I had imagined I should find a Penelope in a little milliner. I therefore resumed my customary cheerfulness and questioned her in my turn.

"By what chance came you to be on my landing talking with Raymond, whom you could never bear?"

"Why this sofa — this sofa in the study?"

"You shall know why it is here, but first answer my question."

"Oh, I'm quite willing — I went into the country yesterday with Gerville — you know him — the young clerk who lives above here. We came in late, and as I was very tired — "

"You passed the night in this house, I see nothing very unusual about that as yet. What else?"

"Well, of course we had to go out early this morning, and at half-past six I went lightly down the stairs and was about to pass through the gateway when I saw Raymond on the watch behind a pillar. He was looking at me and smiling mischievously. 'Pon my honor,' he said to me, 'I didn't believe it was you; the disguise was perfect, the fishwife's costume becomes you very well, but it changes you marvellously; I should have sworn that Monsieur Dorsan was making game of me.' I listened without comprehending what he meant, but your name and what he told me piqued my curiosity. I suspected some mistake, I forced Raymond to tell me all he knew, I was already

laughing at the adventure. Raymond was delighted when he found it was not me who was with you. I asked him if he was certain that your new flame was still in the house. He answered that he was sure, that he had spent a part of the night on the landing, and at daybreak had put himself on the watch beside the gateway. I immediately went up with him, to render the scene more striking, and we waited for an hour at least for you to be pleased to open your door; and we should have remained there until the evening rather than fail to satisfy our mutual curiosity."

"What a queer man that Raymond is, an old woman could not have done more."

"Well, I've told you everything; it is your turn now."

"What do you want me to tell you? You saw a young girl leave my room."

"Yes, and she's very pleasing; has a pretty little face, though her mouth is a trifle large, and then her costume — what, Monsieur Eugene, a dandy like you to take up with round caps; that's not at all like you."

"Mademoiselle is a passing acquaintance, it is indifferent to me whether she wears a cap or a hat."

As the easiest means of satisfying Agathe's curiosity I related my adventure of the night before and how I had been compelled to protect and shelter the poor flower-girl. She interrupted me

with many remarks and exclamations of incredulity, and when I had finished she said with a burst of laughter, "Ha, ha, ha! what a rigmarole to tell me. Do you suppose I'm going to believe all that?"

"Think what you like about it; it is none the less true that Nicette is a good girl and is not an orange-woman."

"Oh, forgive me, monsieur, if I have unknowingly offended your dovey-lovey. Mademoiselle, no doubt, sells jackfish at the Marché des Innocents."

"No, mademoiselle, she only sells bouquets."

"Bouquets, why that's immense; oh, she's a flower-girl."

"Be sure of this, she deserves more consideration than many women who wear the most elegant of bonnets."

"Or more than those who make them, I suppose."

"Yes, even more so."

"Still angry! Come, let us make peace, and I'll believe, if it will please you, that she was the Maid of Orleans."

But I received Mademoiselle Agathe's apology coldly, and the young milliner was piqued in her turn, although she was no longer in love with me; she probably never had been, but in many people vanity takes the place of love and gives birth to jealousy. Agathe resumed her shawl which she

had laid aside on entering, retied her bonnet strings, and curtseyed to me with a smile which she wished to render ironical, but in which spite and vexation were very plainly perceptible.

"Good-by, monsieur, I will leave you to dream at your ease of the brilliant conquest who will hereafter charm all your moments. I beg of you to be kind enough to give my address to Mademoiselle de Nicette; I shall be pleased to have her custom, unless she prefers that modest wrapper. I can understand that to a sensitive and loving heart the round cap of virtue is much preferable to the turban of frivolity."

And Mademoiselle Agathe departed, humming,—

When one knows how to love and please,
Has one need of further riches?

Agathe had been gone for some time, and I was still in my study reflecting upon the events of the previous evening, when somebody opened the door of my apartment; it was Madame Dupont, my portress, who came according to custom to attend to my household matters. The dear woman did not fail to throw a glance about her as she came in, and the women see more in one glance than we of the other sex see in a quarter of an hour.

Idiot that I was I had forgotten to replace my sofa; that wretch Agathe was the cause of that. At any rate I am master of my own apartment, I can arrange my furniture to suit myself. I do

not talk to my portress; Madame Dupont knows that. However, I saw that she turned towards me and sought to enter into conversation.

"It's going to be a fine day; that's a good thing on Sunday, there are so many people who can only walk out on that day."

"Yes, it is very fortunate."

"Oh, you've changed your furniture, monsieur. Do you want the sofa in your study now?"

"No, you may put it back in its place — I will help you."

"Oh, it's an experiment you've been making, monsieur?"

"It was, in fact, an experiment." I replied dryly.

"That's like my daughter, who changes her boy's cradle at every turn, first it's in one place and then in another. How droll, monsieur, your bed is only half disturbed."

"Because I did not move, apparently."

"And you've breakfasted already, so it seems. You were hungry earlier than usual today, monsieur."

I made no further answer, I was engaged on my toilet, being anxious to go out. Madame Dupont stooped and picked up something from the floor and brought it to me with a knowing look.

"Monsieur, here's a little gilt cross that I've picked up beside your bed."

"Oh, give it to me, Madame Dupont, give it

to me; I know what it is, I bought it yesterday. I must send it to some one in the country — it's for our farmer's little girl."

"It's a pretty cross, but it doesn't look new to me."

"You don't know what you are talking about, Madame Dupont."

I quickly put the cross in my pocket, in order to withdraw it from the inquisitive regards of that confounded portress, who, seeing that I did not answer her again, went on talking alone in order that the conversation should not languish.

"They said that young girl was very pretty, and they also said she was crying; it's very singular."

"What young girl are you talking about?"

"Oh, it was a little — a kind of — oh, I don't know what she was, for I didn't see her. However, she passed by my lodge, but so quickly — prr — she went out like a lucifer match."

"Who told you about her, then?"

"Madame Martin, Madame Bertin's cook, who saw her when she went down to get her milk."

"And where did the young person come from?"

"Oh, I — they say — I don't know anything at all about it, monsieur."

Madame Dupont's manner when she told me that she knew nothing proved to me that on the contrary she knew all about it. Raymond must have spoken to Madame Martin, and the latter to the portress; and then the sofa, the little gold

cross would make me the talk of the house. Madame Bertin would be the first to learn of it, and Madame Bertin was the mother of the two pretty young ladies whose esteem I valued so highly. And here, a good action, a truly fine action for a heedless young man, was what would inevitably injure me in everybody's good graces; how unfortunate are appearances sometimes.

I was about to put an end to my portress' chatter by going out, when she stopped me again,—

"Oh, monsieur, forgive me, I was forgetting; I have something to give you."

"What is it now?"

"I had totally forgotten it — this young girl was trotting in my head — it's a letter."

"A letter! Where have you put it?"

"The postman brought it yesterday evening, monsieur; you had already gone out and then when you came back it was late, and I had gone to bed, and I could not have seen you anyway, because —"

"Oh, hang it, Madame Dupont, give me this letter, and spare me your reflections."

"Here it is, monsieur."

I recognized the writing, the postmark; it was from my sister, my dear Amélie. But, by the way, I ought before this to have informed you as to who I am, where I come from, and what I am doing. I confess to you that not thinking of it I should even have been capable of going on with

my story without informing you further, and my adventures would not have been less clear in your eyes; for I have not told you any secret, nor have I related the story of a murder, abduction, poisoning or the substitution of a baby (the latter always produces a very good effect), nor promenades in the galleries of l'Ouest, nor visits to the underworlds, nor meetings in caverns, etc., etc.—I shall have, in consequence, nothing to explain nor even to deny in my denouement, and I shall probably be obliged to end as simply as I began.

But then, let me tell you, it is always good to know with whom one is dealing; and this information is ordinarily given at the outset. That is quite correct, but I hardly care to do as every one else does; and then it seems to me that these eternal histories of families and of birth are not very amusing to the reader, and that is why I am going to be brief.

My name is Eugene Dorsan, my family is Parisian, my father was a solicitor (now they call them advocates—a more dignified title). For the rest, my father was a very honest man, or so they tell me, and I have never doubted it; he made a good deal of money, and in that he did well; but he died when he was still young, and in that he did ill, all the more so that his death was the result of excess of work. My mother was left a widow with two children, my sister, Amélie, the oldest by a year, and your humble

servant. Madame Dorsan was rich, she might have remarried, but she preferred to keep her liberty; she was right in doing so, both for herself and for us; and while I think marriage an excellent thing, I also think it should be used in moderation.

My sister and I each received a good education, by which we profited well, especially my sister, who was naturally gentle, amiable and good, and who sought only to satisfy her masters and prove her love and obedience. I am not a phœnix, but I have no very grave faults. My dominating passion is a fondness for the fair sex, but as in infancy this feeling was naturally undeveloped it could not injure my progress.

My mother had bought a charming country house near Melun; there we were in the habit of spending the summer season. Our infancy and our youth passed along tranquilly, unbroken by any important events. I might almost say without grief or trouble, and, in fact, what subject for grief can there be up to the age of fifteen when one is cherished by rich and kind parents.

How I pity those little unfortunate creatures brought up in poverty by parents who have been rendered hard and insensitive by misfortune. Acquainted while still in their infancy with the troubles of middle age; what a sad apprenticeship to life!

At sixteen years of age my sister had married

a young man of twenty-eight, a good steady fellow, a great worker, who had a cotton spinning mill at Melun. Three years after this marriage our mother died. She had economized for her children, and she left us each ten thousand livres income. Amélie, now Madame Déneterre, had taken up her abode in our country house and I went back to Paris, as much to distract myself from the grief of my mother's loss as to achieve a knowledge of the world.

Since that time, and it is now six years from then, I have become attached to this seductive city to such a point that I do not spend more than six weeks in summer with my sister in the country. I had not as yet been there this year, and this, no doubt, was why Amelie had written to me. This dear sister of mine, who knows that I am not very steady, wishes that I should marry, in the hope that that will put an end to my follies, and every summer I meet at her house a new young lady, very sweet, very pretty, very well brought up, possessing talents and attractions and a dot suited to my circumstances. They present me to these young ladies without saying anything of their wishes, but I divine them. However, in spite of my relatives' desires, my sister's fine sermons on the happiness of the wedded state, and the furtive glances and sighs of the young lady, I always leave at the end of six weeks without making a proposal.

"Patience," says my sister to her husband,

"next year I venture to say we shall find some one who will make an impression on him."

"Well, so be it," answers Déneterre quietly; "we'll wait till next year."

Now, let us read my sister's letter.

My Dear Eugene: — We have now reached the end of July, and you have not yet come to see us; is living in Paris going to make you entirely forget the relations who love you, and who are incessantly thinking of your future?

Of my future — ah, I understand; they have another marriage in view. But what a fury Amélie has for getting me married; she's worse than a tutor in a comedy. But let us get on with the letter.

It seems to me that you ought to be tired of these numerous flirtations and amorous adventures, tired of these women who are led by pleasure only, and who forget you as quickly as they fall in love with you.

What sarcasm! But you are mistaken my dear sister, I am by no means tired of making conquests; those that I make are not quite so easy as you think. Why in the provinces people are still more evil-minded, more slanderous than in Paris; and since my sister has left the capital she has taken it upon herself to lecture me. But at heart she is so kind that I don't wish her to be constantly worrying about me. Let's see, where was I?

As quickly as they fall in love with you. I often have news of you through persons coming from Paris; I know that you are more heedless than ever, that you think of nothing but pleasure, that you are unfaithful to all your mistresses, and that they are in turn unfaithful to you.

How exactly she has divined the state of things — it is astonishing.

No one has ever cited to me a commendable action performed by you.

Oh, my dear sister, if you did but know the history of this night; and they calumniate me, they treat me as hopelessly fickle. Oh, Nicette, you were really very pretty, and there was a good deal of merit in my eminently virtuous conduct.

I hope, however, that you are not quite incorrigible. Come and see us very soon. We have some pretty women here also, and they are very modest and virtuous, which, it seems to me, should make them still more charming in your sight.

Oh, no doubt, very pretty women, formal, affected, prudish, or full of airs and graces — and such figures — provincial, in short, which expresses everything. As to virtue, no doubt they are very virtuous — but one must not judge by appearances, as no one ought to know better than I; for I would have sworn that Nicette was no better than she ought to be.

My husband sends a note of some commissions he begs you to execute for him. He has got up some fine fishing parties for your arrival; as for me, it will be a festival to embrace you.

AMÉLIE DÉNETERRE.

I resolved to go to them in a few days. It was first necessary that I should pursue my new flirtations to their end. I should be much pleased, besides, to know what Nicette was doing; I was interested in this young girl, and I did not like to lose sight of her.

I left my rooms and was about to go downstairs, but I could not resist the desire to speak to my neighbor Raymond. I wished to thank him for his discretion. I rang, no one answered — I had, however, heard some noise. I rang again, this time so violently that the bell cord remained in my hand. No one opened. I wager that he had made some hole in his door and that he had seen it was me. No matter, he could not always avoid me; in the meantime, that he might have no doubt as to who had broken his bell-pull, I tied it to the one on my own door. I went down at length; on the landing of the first floor I met Madame Bertin and her two daughters, who were going to mass. I bowed; they returned my greeting, but with a coldness in marked contrast to the amiable welcome they had always accorded me. The two young ladies filed past me without raising their eyes, and the mamma had an icy expression which forbade me to speak to her.

This was the result of Raymond's, Madame Martin's and the portress' gossip. They knew that Nicette had passed the night in my apartments; that is to say, the mamma knew it, and that was why she had ordered her daughters to pass by me without raising their eyes, without smiling, and above all without speaking to me.

But then there was that little milliner you say. Oh, that was very different. Agathe was dressed like everybody else, and no one noticed her; be-

sides there were several people in the house for whom she worked, and they never knew precisely to whose apartments she was going.

I was able, therefore, to preserve Madame Bertin's good graces and admission to her society when Mademoiselle Agathe honored me with her acquaintance, and I was extremely ill-received because Nicette, the gentle flower-girl, had passed the night at my rooms. And you know, reader, how little their strictures were deserved. But the world judges from external appearances rather than from intrinsic merit. You may be and do what you will if you do but respect the proprieties; save appearances, and you will be received everywhere.

These reflections put me in a bad temper; I went out inveighing against those who saw everything under the same aspect, and who did not wish to deviate by a hair's breath from the beaten track of custom. I walked about ill-temperedly, I dined ill-temperedly, I took my coffee ill-temperedly, and in the same disposition of mind I found myself at the entrance to the Champs Élysées, where I seated myself on a chair backed against a big tree.

CHAPTER VI

The Magic Lantern. Tivoli. Fireworks. The Fortune-Teller. The Portrait Gallery

Night found me still seated in melancholy meditation against the great tree; the darkness had already dispersed and put to flight a great part of the visitors.

Those who remained plunged still deeper into the paths and seemed to seek by preference those neighborhoods which were the darkest and least frequented, and no doubt these young people had their own very good reasons for so doing. Solitude — especially solitude that is shared by the one we love best — has its charms.

I don't remember exactly what I was thinking of, and perhaps my thoughts were not worthy of remembrance — when I heard heavy footsteps which came to a pause behind me. I turned and saw a man loaded with one of those pleasing inventions that we call a magic lantern. He placed his apparatus near the great tree beneath which I was seated; either he had not seen me, or he paid no attention to me. He proceeded dextrously to rub his flint that he might light the lamps that were necessary for the exhibition of his pictures, and

I thought then of Florian's monkey ; the remembrance of the fable made me laugh, and I prepared to listen to the owner of the lantern, although I feared the comparison for him.

I heard him mutter, as he placed his lights in the lantern, arranged the screen on which his pictures were to fall and around it affixed a sort of tent or curtain of canvas,—

"O the hussy — the jade ! Where has she been for these three hours past, since she left me under the pretext of going to give the little one something to eat? Playing some trick on me, I'll be bound. If this wasn't a day for taking in money I should leave my business and see about it. It's all right, Madame Trousquin. I shall clear up my doubts, and if I find anything suspicious I shall give you a very effective drubbing."

It appeared to me that the poor man was jealous ; he swore, stamped his feet, and looked from one side to the other, but Madame Trousquin did not come back. Instead, however, the light of the magic lantern attracted a young girl and a young soldier, who placed himself beside the young girl and asked the man to close the tent well over them. The latter completely hid them with the old canvas, blue or gray, for one could hardly distinguish the color, and I could not help thinking that a magic lantern might be very useful sometimes.

Father Trousquin, who remained at the back of

the lantern, behind the tent, where I could see all his movements, began his spectacle, interrupting himself quite often to swear at his wife who did not come back, and I listened attentively, although I of course could see nothing of the pictures, not being under the canvas, but I had an idea that the couple for whom his explanations were made did not pay much heed to the pictures.

"You see in the first place, messieurs and mesdames, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the fishes; later on come the products of the earth, as trees, vegetables, animals, vegetation, caverns, torrents, rattlesnakes. Examine the sun, monsieur, which you cannot look at while he is shining; and the moon which is at the full, though with us she is in her first quarter. See these stars which are falling as if the devil was after them. (Three hours to put Fifi to bed! O the jade! how she shall dance this evening!) Do you see Venus, who shines like a pinchbeck scarfpin? Do you see the shepherd's star? It is, no doubt, the shepherd Tircis, according to his reputation. Do you see the three kings, who never appear singly? Do you see the Wain, which rolls like those on the Russian mountains?[1] Do you see Mercury and Jupiter? Do you see Virgo and the Gemini? Do you see Taurus and Capricornus? The latter are within reach of everybody. Do you see Libra and Scorpio, who is an ugly beast? All these, messieurs

[1] The precursor of the modern chutes.

Father Trousquin . . . remained at the back of the lantern.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY G. A. WILLIAMS.

[illegible] the tent, where I could see all [illegible] began his speeches, interrupting [illegible] often to swear at his wife who did [illegible], and I listened attentively, although [illegible] could see nothing of the pictures, not [illegible] the canvas, but I had an idea that [illegible] for whom his explanations were made [illegible] pay much heed to the pictures.

"You see in the first place, messieurs and mes-[illegible], the sun, the moon, the stars, and the fishes; [illegible] on come the [illegible] of the earth, as trees, vegetables, animals, [illegible], caverns, torrents, [illegible]. [illegible], monsieur, which [illegible] look [illegible] and the [illegible] which is [illegible] though with us she is [illegible] stars which are fall-[illegible] them. (Three hours [illegible] jade! how she shall [illegible] evening!) Do you see Venus, who [illegible] like a pinchbeck starfpin? Do you see the [illegible] star? It is, no doubt, the shepherd [illegible] according to his reputation. Do you see [illegible] kings, who [illegible] appear singly? Do [illegible] the Wain, which [illegible] like those on the [illegible] mountains?" Do you see Mercury and [illegible]? Do you see [illegible] the Gemini? Do [illegible] Taurus and [illegible]? The latter are [illegible] of everybody. Do you see Libra and [illegible] these messieurs

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and mesdames, are planets which govern the nervous infections of individuals who are born under their influence. The planet Venus is the star of light women, the Berger rules the destiny of gay bachelors, the Three Kings that of heroes, the Wain that of cabmen, Jupiter that of jolly dogs, Mercury that of apothecaries, Virgo the Virgin, that of little girls, and Capricornus is the star of certain individuals who are well known to you. Notice, messieurs and mesdames, in the midst of this black cloud dotted with stars, between the Bear and the Ram, you may perceive a big hairy comet with a tail much longer than that of a fox. This brilliant meteor has in all the ages announced the end of the world; it can with its head or its tail overturn our globe, which is only held by a thread, and frizzle us all up like chestnuts before the fire."

Here there was a good deal of movement under the canvas, and I supposed that the young people were stretching their necks to look more closely at the length of this terrific comet's tail.

"One moment, messieurs and mesdames, you will now see what you will see."

Father Trousquin pulled his string to change the picture, and after some very energetic swearing resumed his explanations without varying his voice a quarter of a tone,—

"This, messieurs and mesdames, represents to your view the interior of the palace of the great

Kin-kin-li-king, the emperor of China and king of Pekin. You behold him seated in his splendid golden armchair in grand state costume, surrounded by mandarins, poodles, and National Guards. He is giving a public audience to and receiving the petitions of all the Chinese from the outskirts. See in one corner, a father, supported by a bamboo cane and by his daughter; he has come to demand justice against the seducer of his child, by whom the poor innocent has had five children, to whom the cruel father gives the whip as their only nourishment. Notice, messieurs, how the features of this unfortunate father are animated by anger and resentment; see in the eyes of the young girl, grief, sorrow, repentance. A little to the left, this man wrapped in a brown cloak awaits his sentence; see how pale and shrunken his face is, how hollow his eye, and how trembling his step, he knows well that he will not be let off cheaply. Farther off, in the background of the picture —"

A stout, motherly woman who came running up all out of breath interrupted the explanation of the spectacle. I presumed that it was Madame Trousquin; and, in fact, the dialogue which took place between her and the owner of the magic lantern proved that I had divined rightly.

M. Trousquin.— Ah, here you are at last, you detestable baggage! — Farther off, in the background of the picture — (To his wife) You shall

pay me for this, that's all I have to say — Farther off, in the background of the picture, see this unhappy wretch who is being led by some guards, and who is writhing as if he had the colic; it is a deserter, who had deserted and was going treacherously to the enemy's camp; his business won't take long to finish, he will be shot, and afterwards hanged.

MADAME TROUSQUIN (during her husband's explanations).— Well, what have you got to holler about, now? Didn't I have to put Fifi to sleep and make the soup? And isn't it a famous trot from the Champs-Élysées to the Rue Jean-Pain Mollet?

M. TROUSQUIN.— You're lying, I tell you; you left before five and here it's nine o'clock. Where have you been? Pull the slide.

Madame Trousquin placed the porringer she was holding under her apron on a stool, then went to her post, which was beside the lantern, where the changes of scene were made.

M. TROUSQUIN.— This, messieurs and mesdames, shows you a scene in Athens, Greece — (To his wife) Put my soup on the foot-stove, and answer me where have you been?

MADAME TROUSQUIN.— Why, I've come straight from our house, you jealous wretch; I met Angélique and I chatted to her for a few moments. Have you had many people?"

M. TROUSQUIN.— Notice the beauty of the sky

and the water. Notice this palace, these columns, and these temples, built by the Romans; see these superb statues, of which the ruins only remain. See this circus, in which they held bull fights to exercise the youths to make them big — (To his wife) I'm sure you've been walking with Grugeon — Farther off you see those famous wrestlers who are fighting with their fists like the English; here they are struggling one on top of the other; here they are playing quoits with a big caster. — (To his wife) I daresay he proposed a quartern in a private room.— This fine young man you see to the right is Alcibiades with his preceptor Socrates, who is teaching him things he doesn't know.

While listening to all this I noticed that the canvas was still more violently agitated, and I heard the young girl say in a half-whisper; "Oh, how stupid you are! Why don't you stop now? I told you I didn't want you to kiss me."

Father Trousquin signed to his wife to pull the slide and resumed his discourse.

"This, messieurs and mesdames, is taken from mythology, it is the splendid judgment of the great Solomon, called the 'Wise,' who is preparing to cut a baby in two equal parts, just as you would a pie. See the consternation of the little thing, who's awaiting his fate with his legs in the air; see the joy of this matron who's looking on with dry eyes as if they were going to give her

half a rabbit; but see the sorrow of the true mother, who wants to turn aside the larding knife, which already threatens the days of the poor innocent."

The young girl under the canvas: "Oh, you wretch, you wretch; how dare you kiss me again. Get away, you big stupid."

M. Trousquin.— Don't be alarmed; they're not going to cut him; nature is going to speak — (To his wife) Why do you always give me onion soup? — This child cannot have two mothers or two fathers. One can easily see that — (To his wife) You never make any other kind.— But here the mystery of the true mother's love declares itself by a deluge of tears, while the pretended mother remains as tranquil as the head of John the Baptist — (To his wife) It smells burned, too — has no maternal yearnings and the child is adjudged to the former. Pull the string! This, messieurs and mesdames, represents King David fighting the great Goliath, the terror of the Philistines — (To his wife) See if it isn't now — See with what vigor David hurls a pebble and prostrates the giant in the dust.

Madame Trousquin (looking behind the lantern).— This won't do, you're showing them the battle of Marengo.

M. Trousquin.— Let me tell you, messieurs and mesdames, you are now viewing the celebrated battle of Marengo won by the French

troops — (To his wife) You've put in plenty of carrots again.

MADAME TROUSQUIN.— What, must I pick and choose your vegetables? You're getting very dainty. How much have you made today.

M. TROUSQUIN.— Eighteen sous — Notice these gunners and these cuirassiers, see how their sabres are flashing, while the cannon balls are clashing and the bullets are putting everything to the fire and the sword; see the hussars, the dragoons, the trumpets, and the drums; hear the cries of the dead and the dying, the groans of the wounded and the vanquished. See on the right that young soldier who is defending his flag with his teeth, because he has already had both his arms cut off; and on the left this officer who has three dead horses on top of him, and who forgets that he is stifling to take aim at one of the enemy's generals. See the dust, the flame, the smoke, the carnage, and the death which embellish the picture. Look how fine the action is; the combat waxes furious, they are hot at it —

Here the explanation was interrupted by an unexpected catastrophe; the young girl and the soldier, who had been much interested in the battle, no doubt, for I heard the damsel's exclamations and her companion's more energetic notes of admiration, and the latter must again have essayed to kiss his sweetheart, for not only did they shake the canvas, but they overturned the magic

lantern at the most interesting part of the battle of Marengo. The shock was so sudden that the movable theatre could not resist it; it fell over backwards and the spectators fell under it, while the manager of the establishment was upset with his porringer and Madame Trousquin seized the strings which held the canvas together with both hands.

I alone remained in an upright position in the midst of the disaster, for my big tree had preserved me from being upset. But what a grotesque scene met my eyes. Solomon and the great Kin-kin-li-king were mixed up pell-mell with the gardens of the Luxembourg and Athens; the sun was eclipsed, the moon covered with oil, and the comet minus its tail. Father Trousquin was sprawled on the broken lantern, still holding the handle of his porringer; while the damsel had fallen in such a manner as to display rather more of her limbs than is permissible in polite society. The young soldier's head was exactly fitted into Father Trousquin's porringer, and carrots and onions were dispersed pleasingly about his countenance; he seemed to be held in such a manner as to be unable to pick himself up again. As to Mother Trousquin, she fell gracefully, her strings had sustained her, and the curtain of the lantern hid what might have shocked her modesty. However, as those who are the least hurt always make the greatest outcry, Madame Trousquin uttered the most

deafening cries, her husband gave vent to some frightful oaths, and the young damsel bemoaned herself plaintively. The soldier alone did not shout; it is my private belief that he was too busily engaged in licking up the soup and the vegetables, which he doubtless found tasty. The noise, the shouts, the swearing brought all the promenaders running to the broken lantern, and I was in the brief space of a minute surrounded by a crowd of people who came from I know not where, for a moment previously I had perceived nobody in the Champs-Élysées. They cut off my retreat; I could not leave the group, but I was not displeased to have an opportunity of witnessing the termination of the comedy. After much shouting and swearing they endeavored to get out of their embarrassing positions. The soldier got his head out of his improvised helmet; the young girl arose and adjusted her clothing; Mother Trousquin disentangled herself from her strings; they picked up the magic lantern and got Father Trousquin on to his feet again. The soldier sought to lead away his companion, but there was no way of avoiding the proprietor of the lantern, who wanted to make him pay the damages.

"My slides are broken," said Father Trousquin to the soldier, "you've made stains on the sun and the moon; you've smashed my judgment of Solomon and my Chinese palace; you've spoilt my views of Greece. You must pay for all that."

"You go to Jericho," said the soldier, repairing the havoc the soup had made in his toilet, as well as he could. "I shall pay you nothing at all. A fig for your Chinese and your Solomon; your sun and your moon are just like farthing nightlights; and as to your Greece, you can put that in your lamps."

"You've broken my lantern, and you shall pay for it."

"You're an old drunkard, and if your lantern wasn't solid that isn't my fault."

"You threw it over during the battle of Marengo."

"It was the firing of your old cannons that upset it."

"You've made me break my porringer."

"And you've made me tear my trousers."

"Besides, my lantern is a virtuous and moral spectacle, and I don't intend it shall serve as a—"

"If you don't stop, I'll cut out your tongue."

The soldier laid his hand on his sabre; the crowd immediately made a retrograde movement, the damsel held fast to her sweetheart's arm, and Mother Trousquin pushed her husband back, taking the stool for a shield. Each party looked steadily at the other for some minutes. The soldier had no appearance of being likely to pay, and Father Trousquin did not seem in the humor to allow the young fellow to depart without indemnifying him for his losses. I judged that

there was only one way to settle the matter without loss of blood. The adventure had amused me and had totally dissipated my ill-humor; it was therefore just that I should act as a mediator in the quarrel. I alone remained near the disputing parties; for the curiosity-seekers kept at a respectful distance from the stool and the sabre. I fumbled in my pocket, and drew therefrom two hundred-sous pieces which I threw on the wreck.

"There," I said to the owner of the magic lantern, "there is what will restore your palaces and your stars; take it, but another time, believe me, it would be better not to close your curtain hermetically on the spectators. These children's spectacles are now visited by people of all ages, and such goings on are better suited to Seraphin's, where people may do their sweethearting very tranquilly, thanks to the obscurity which reigns in the hall during the Arabian fires."

Father Trousquin opened his eyes wide, his wife leaped at the two crowns, and they allowed the soldier to depart with his young friend, which he did after saluting me very respectfully.

I departed also, and reached the Rue Rivoli. I looked at my watch, it was only nine o'clock and I had never liked to go to bed early, above all not when I felt inclined to amuse myself. And as the magic-lantern scene had put me in the mood for amusement I wished to maintain such an amiable disposition.

How could I amuse myself? In Paris there are a thousand ways, let me tell you; but in regard to pleasure, one must never allow one's expectations to run too high, if one wishes to have a little. In a large gathering, where you find six people who are pleasing you meet twenty bores; and in small ones your friends may have matters which affect their spirits, the ladies headaches or blues, and one often passes some very dismal moments when one has promised one's self much amusement. The wisest thing, therefore, is to count on nothing. But I remembered that there was a grand fête at Tivoli. It was nine o'clock; I hailed a cabriolet and arrived there just at the pleasantest time of the evening.

Beautiful garden of Tivoli! as I stepped within its precincts I could have imagined I had entered one of those enchanted places so well depicted in the "Thousand and One Nights." The music, the illuminations, the amusements of all kinds, the fireworks, all united in dazzling the eyes and pleasing the senses. What a pity it seemed when some commonplace woman, with the manners of a fishwife, came to spoil the picture and recall me to the fact that I was in a public garden where, with a decent appearance and three livres, twelve sous, any one might enter.

I had not taken more than a few steps and I had already seen so many things! How beautiful those paths were; how these garlands of light

astonished the sight! There people crowded, they looked about them, they scanned the toilets, they sought acquaintances; it was the Boulevard de Gand of Tivoli. Let us walk a little farther on; the lights became less frequent, a few lamps placed at long intervals guided people without betraying them. Here the couples were more disseminated; they were no longer seeking to see or be seen, some of them even appeared to be avoiding observation and seeking those places which are the darkest and most obscure. Fortunate shrubbery, which protects love and pleasure; how many kisses have been given and received in the shelter of your thick foliage; there, without thinking where I was going, I found myself plunged in these solitary bushes where I had nothing to hope for, for I was alone. Suddenly, in emerging from behind a bush, I came on something white on the grass—it was a gentleman and lady who were seated there, chatting no doubt of very important matters and very confidential matters, too, for I think they were whispering; but my presence disturbed them and the lady uttered a little exclamation as she pushed the gentleman away; let us get from here as quickly as possible, for what pleasure can one find in disturbing that of others?

I resolved to rejoin the crowd and leave these bushes, where I was getting ill-tempered because I was alone. There I was again in the thick of it all. I heard the rolling of the sledges, I was

near the mountains, where the fashionable lady, the little working girl, the milliner, the outfitter, and the little schoolgirl are all sliding down these steep inclines. How much enjoyment all these ladies seemed to find in flying from the top to the bottom. How the rush of air disarranged their locks, blew off their bonnets, and set their ringlets a-flying; but that was nothing to the joy of going as fast as the wind for twenty seconds or so. Pleasure was depicted on all the faces of the occupants of the sledges, with the exception of a few English ones, which preserved their accustomed gravity even in the giddy occupation of mountain-sledging. I was alone, so I did not engage in this rapid pastime; for I felt that to take pleasure in it one should be seated near a pleasing companion, so that one might pass one's arm around a charming waist and hold a lovely form very close to one. For one may in darting through the air dare many things, certain of not being repulsed because those who partake of this sport are always so stunned by the rapidity of their course that they have no time to be vexed.

Love turns everything that offers in the way of pleasure to advantage. Who is there who does not experience it doubly when it is shared by the one he loves — in dancing, in mountain-sledging, under the bushes, there must be two in order to fully enjoy it; how can one give one's self up to the sweetest sensations, to the tenderest outpour-

ings, unless one is in the company of a woman? It is only beside her that one knows his own heart. But I tried to put away these ideas, to which this garden had given rise despite myself. I started across the squares, whither the music called me; it was a man singing. I dared not stop; Tivoli would have ceased to be enchanted.

What did I see down there? Some armchairs which turned on pivots as they swung in the air, and shook the ladies who were seated in them — it was a Russian see-saw. Why were all those gentlemen running towards them, gazing with uplifted faces and much jeering laughter as the seats turned round. Ah, I saw that the wind lightly lifted the bottoms of the ladies' dresses, and displayed their ankles and sometimes even a knee. This was a game which amused the spectators quite as much as it did the participants.

These ladies were not aware, or so it appears, of what captivated the attention of the gentlemen, nor did they seem to hear the free remarks uttered by the greater part of the curious observers; for they continued to fly in the air, laughing like little madwomen. But the turner stopped, they must descend; I remained, that I might see the ladies nearer to. By Jove, gentlemen, it was hardly worth giving yourselves a crick in the neck to get a peep at a bit of stocking. Such a trifle as that was hardly likely, as far as I could see, to shock the modesty of these dames.

I left the Russian see-saw, and went to see Bobèche. An immense crowd was before the theatre, and I looked in vain for a chair that I might sit down like the other spectators, but it was impossible to find one empty.

I had to remain standing, and as I threaded my way between the elect if I could not see Bobèche at least I saw something else; I noticed the pleasure evinced by the young men who were standing like myself; they could see nothing, but they were with ladies mounted on chairs, and they were supporting them, for fear of accidents; their arms were around the bottoms of the ladies' gowns, and they supported them on their shoulders. I could conceive that the situation might have its compensations. Oh, by Jove; there's a lady who is going to fall. Why is no one supporting her? Truth to tell, the lady is a grandmotherly sort of person. However, a young woman, who would have been pretty had not her get-up been ridiculous for a public garden, hurried up to the old lady's side.

"Wait, mamma," said she, "I will put my chair behind yours, and then you can lean on me and I will support you."

The mamma consented to this arrangement, and the young person got up on her chair again, having placed it behind her mother; but I then perceived that some one was supporting her also; a big fair fellow had not lost sight of her, he placed himself beside her, he looked at her,— he made

little signs to her. The young damsel looked only at Bobèche and, while explaining the play to her mother, she took out of her glove a little note which she dropped into the young man's hand; she did it without disturbing any one, without affectation, without interrupting the conversation. In truth, our young ladies do everything with such charming grace; the world is progressing towards perfection.

The big blond fellow rolled the note in his hand; he had an immense desire to read it on the spot, but he dared not. I was amused at his impatience, I wanted to see what he would do. But an elderly couple came up, dragging some chairs after them; the lady placed herself exactly before me, almost thrusting her skirts into my face, and her husband succeeded in blotting out the little view that remained to me by placing himself beside his better half.

I could not stay there by any means, surrounded though I was by all these charming figures; I felt the need of something more interesting than the broad breadths of bombazine which obscured my vision. I withdrew, not without trouble, from the chairs, the legs, the draperies, which surrounded me. At last I got outside where I could breathe a little; a draught of fresh air is acceptable to one who has been seeing Bobèche, even when the performance is in the open air. I was in a beautiful grove of lime trees which led to an immense grassy

square, where people were exercising themselves recklessly with see-saws, swings, the Egyptian bird, and a thousand other things. I heard the ladies who were swinging begging their escorts not to push so hard, while the latter, to show their vigor and force, exerted all their strength, at the risk of causing those who had consented to swing with them to be overcome with dizziness; this was a novel way of doing the amiable. But some one was crying down there! It was a little boy of twelve or thirteen who had wanted to ride on the see-saw with a big booby of eighteen years old, at least. The latter pushed his end of the beam down so suddenly that the little fellow at the other end felt a violent shock which made him leap half over the little bar by which the riders hold on; the poor child was thrown off, but fortunately fell on the grass, and was not wounded, but he hobbled off, while the big idiot was quite proud of the jounce he had given him. See-sawing is a very nice game, but I advise those who are going to take part in it to have the ground covered with mattresses, for I know by experience that the falls are frequent and dangerous.

I now heard a loud detonation which stopped me in spite of myself; was I near a box of gunpowder? No, it was the Egyptian bird, which had just been let fly. How proud the person who had hit the mark seemed to be. He had surely reason to be so, for he had only let the bird fly eleven times.

A fat gentleman seized the iron wire; I recognized him, it was Raymond. I had been rather astonished at not meeting him before, for the man was everywhere.

"I bet," said he boastingly to the man who had just played — taking care to raise his voice that he might attract attention — "I bet, my dear fellow (he was intimate with everybody), that I can make the trigger go off in three goes."

"And I wager you won't; it isn't so easy as you seem to think."

"Easy! easy! if it were easy, there would be no merit in doing it. My eye is perfectly sure. Come, I'll bet you an ice."

"That you'll touch it in three goes?"

"Yes, I'm about sure that I shan't have to try three times."

"I wager you won't do it in three tries."

"That's understood; you shall see."

I paused, quite certain for my own part that my neighbor would make a fizzle somehow. The man in charge of the game was now reloading the iron box to which the trigger was attached.

"Get out of the way," shouted Raymond to him, impatient to show his skill, and raising the bird as high as his arm would allow him.

The box was reclosed, the man withdrew; Raymond let fly the bird with such precision that the piece of iron, after making several curves, struck six inches from the target. My neighbor was not

discouraged; he sent the bird again, and again was he unsuccessful —

"It has lost its equilibrium," cried he; "the iron wire comes across it, it's not my fault."

"This is your last shot."

"Oh, this will be a good one."

This time Raymond took aim for three minutes at least; at length the bird flew across the space, it finished its career, but the explosion did not take place.

"I've won! I've won!" shouted Raymond's antagonist, "you owe me an ice."

"Oh, you've won; that depends on circumstances. I'm sure that the bird's beak touched the trigger; and if it didn't go off it's because the powder is damp."

"It was a bad defeat; you've lost, you owe me an ice."

"Well, then, I want my revenge."

"Oh, that's all right; I agree to that. That'll make two ices instead of one."

"We shall see as to that. Say now, my man, go and fix the trigger again; I'm sure something's out of gear that prevents the thing from going off."

To please the player, the owner of the game turned again to open the box and examine it. While he was doing so, my neighbor had taken the bird again, and, mortified at having lost his first bet, he measured and looked at the iron beak,

and seeking to give perfect equilibrium to the bird, he took it delicately by the two wings.

"I see what it is! I see what it is," said he with assurance; "had I looked at it like that just now I shouldn't have missed a shot. The bird must be held very lightly on the finger tips and then launched very evenly."

So saying, M. Raymond let the bird escape and it struck the head of the unfortunate man who was looking to see if the trigger was in order. The poor man was severely wounded; he fell on the grass, uttering the most horrible cries, everybody flew towards him, and M. Raymond profited by the disorder to escape. He opened a passage through the crowd by pushing everybody before him with his elbows and hands, he jumped over chairs and strode like a madman over groups seated on the grass, caught in the legs of a little butterfly of a woman who was carelessly seated on the grass talking to a young officer, fell heavily over her, crushing a bosom that was fortunately nothing but padding. The lady exclaimed to make people believe that it really was her neck he had flattened, the officer arose, furious at this, and seizing a chair pursued Raymond, who was already far off, fear lending him wings. I amused myself by following my neighbor, who had lost his hat in his mad rush. I could still see him running and making some fresh blunder at every step; he hurled himself against a swing, bumped against

wooden horses, upset two damsels who were waltzing in a little square, knocked over all the boxes of shrubs he found in his way and, finally, to get out of sight of those who were pursuing him, darted into a wide path hoping to lose himself in the crowd. But there, in passing under a garland of colored lamps which had not been sufficiently raised and which hung a little low at the sides, M. Raymond caught himself in the illuminations; the cord broke, and the little colored glasses came tumbling down on the promenaders, who were in an instant covered with stains. The ladies uttered heartrending shrieks at the sight of their toques, their feathers, their gowns, dripping with lamp oil; the young men were no less furious, their coats, their waistcoats, their cravats, everything was ruined, and exhaled a detestable smell. Raymond saw himself again the object of the general anger. The poor devil, still all out of breath, was obliged to resume his flight; he jumped over a hedge of hornbeam bushes to get out of the pathway quicker, he did not know where to direct his steps, and dashed into an enclosure destined for the fireworks, despite the shouts of an old soldier who told him that no one could pass there. He walked over the fusees, the boxes, the bombs, the artichokes, the Roman candles; the old soldier called on the gendarmes to arrest a man who was breaking everything, and who evidently wanted to prevent the pyrotechnic display which they had

prepared. The guard came, Raymond had only time to hurl himself into a transparency, which he shattered with his head like Franconi's deer; at last he disappeared. Everybody became calmer, they tried to repair the damage that my neighbor had done; and I turned back to the centre of the games, laughing at Raymond's mishaps, which had already avenged me for his little trick of the morning.

"Faith," I cogitated, as I made my way towards the dancing, "though I didn't come to Tivoli to witness Raymond's feats, they in themselves would furnish sufficient enjoyment for the evening. But I am in luck; perhaps fate has some other encounters in store for me." I stopped near a conjuror's booth; the crowd was as considerable as that before Bobèche, but here at least there was a little more order. The greater part of the spectators were seated, and although in the last row I could see everything. He drew some cards, juggled some rings, and changed a glass of wine into flowers. All this delighted the company, who did not wish to recognize his confederates nor the arrangements made for the tricks done "without preparation."

"He's a sorcerer," said a little gentleman, opening his eyes wide and looking stupidly around him. "Faith, I don't understand how he does it; do you, wife?"

"Oh, I want to see how it's done for myself,"

responded his better-half; and she signed to the conjuror that she wanted to draw a card. The latter drew near, jabbering in Italian, German and English, which made a jargon sufficiently incomprehensible to heighten the delight of the company.

The lady drew the eight of spades, which she put back in the pack, shuffling the cards; but our sorcerer did not fail to divine the card because there was nothing but an eight of spades in the pack he presented to her to draw from, and while bamboozling his audience he slipped his hand behind the little gentleman, who, when he was occupied with another trick, was suddenly asked to rise, and was dumfounded when he found under him the card which his wife had drawn.

I departed from the sorcerer's booth, but on feeling in my pocket for my handkerchief I found it was no longer there. This was a trick worthy of the conjuror; it had been very adroitly done, happily, I had returned my ticket.

I had now reached the precincts of the dance; but it was no longer considered good form to dance in public gardens, it was only in village fêtes that our Parisian people of fashion would consent to set to partners or dance the ladies' chain in the open air. Here, the street sellers, the little shopkeepers, the grisettes only dare to participate in the dancing; they know no restraint, care nothing for good form, they only want to

amuse themselves, and they do so delight in dancing! Pleasure is depicted on their faces, they skip about with such a good heart. I saw from the expressions of those fine damsels who only looked on at the dancing that good form is sometimes very disagreeable, but they avenged themselves by criticising those who braved it. They made game of some of them, they mocked others, they uttered sarcastic little speeches; good form and good manners never forbid one's doing such things as these! They turned into ridicule that which they could not do, they spoke slightingly of what they loved in secret; it was the old fable of the fox and the grapes over again.

But the spectators were going towards another quadrille; the crowd was growing larger, the dancers were surrounded by a triple row of curious people. There must be some pretty, saucy little faces there, or some very comical figures. I drew nearer and I could see clearly. I looked at the lady whose turn it was to dance; an insignificant face, very ordinary apparel; this could not be the object of the general attention.

"She's really very pleasing."

"Oh, you will soon see how gracefully she dances."

These speeches were uttered by two young men beside me. I glanced at the rest of the dancers who made up the quadrille, and my gaze was arrested by a young person who wore a little

cap adorned with a bunch of artificial roses. But in looking at the pretty dancer I was struck by a sudden remembrance; those features, that figure, that bunch of roses, and then that promise to go to Tivoli — there was no further doubt about it, it was Mademoiselle Caroline, it was my little flower-maker of yesterday. Heedless that I am, I had forgotten all about it, and I was walking in the garden without looking for her. Well, since fortune had favored me, in allowing me to thus come upon her by chance, I would take advantage of it and, setting aside all class prejudices, try to dance with her in order that I might get to speak to her.

But what if some of my acquaintances should see me dancing at Tivoli! Why, as for that, I was ready to brave the criticisms, the rallying of the young men, the bantering of the ladies; and, as I looked at Caroline, I said with Rousseau: "One must be happy; it is the primal need of man." But in order to be happy it was necessary, first of all, that I should dance with Caroline.

The contra-dance came to an end; the men had led their partners to their places. I had followed the little flower-maker with my eyes, I saw her seat herself beside a very plainly dressed old woman — the aunt, apparently. The young person's partner remained beside her, and I recognized him as the M. Jules of the evening before. At length

another young girl was led up by her attentive swain, and seated herself beside Caroline; this, no doubt, completed the party, as I now remembered it was to have been composed of four persons.

I walked back and forth around Mademoiselle Caroline and her companions for a long time; I passed in front of the group, I looked at the pretty girl — but no one paid any attention to me. I felt that there was nothing for me to do but to ask her to dance, though I could hardly bring myself to do so; I should look like a petty shopkeeper's clerk, a counter-jumper, who came to dance every Sunday at Tivoli. As I reflected thus, the orchestra began to play the overture; that decided me, and I went up to the young person. But just as I was about to ask for the pleasure of a dance, the pretty flower-maker rose and gave her hand to a young man who was in front of me, and who led her to the dance. I had got there too late; this was what came of listening to a foolish pride. But I promised myself the first contra-dance, and, for fear of being again forestalled, I hurried to the set in which Caroline was dancing and invited her for the next contra-dance. She accepted, and I was delighted; I remained near her, mingled my eulogies with those of several other young men, and, while her partner was advancing with the opposite young lady, I complimented her on her bunch of roses and asked her to excuse me for my awkwardness of the evening

before. Then she looked at me, smiled, and accorded me a little more of her attention; and I had grounds for believing that the examination did not result to my disadvantage. I ventured a few words from time to time, giving her to understand that I had only come to Tivoli in the hope of meeting her; she did not make any answer, but I saw that she was listening to me. If only she be a little coquettish I shall make my way, and she has, she must have, a spice of coquetry, or she is unlike the rest of her sex.

The contra-dance was ended and I awaited the following one with impatience; for I could then talk to Caroline and easily learn how far my hopes were to be fulfilled. In the shortest conversation I ordinarily judge of the person with whom I have to do, and I am rarely mistaken; not that I believe all that they say to me, but I can readily divine when they are inclined to favor my suit. Ladies are more expansive than the other sex, they have a certain unrestraint which allows a good deal to be inferred by men who are accustomed to have dealings with them. When they have wit a couple of words reveals it, when they have nothing but twaddle they overwhelm you with it, when they have nothing to say there is no way of mistaking them. Montaigne said: "Style is man"; I believe that he might also have said: "Conversation is woman," — though I sincerely beg his pardon for daring to set forth my opinion after his own.

Mademoiselle Caroline was led back to her place. While awaiting the next contra-dance, which would afford me the means of judging her better, I walked among the bushes which surrounded the enclosure set apart for the dance. I could not stay by the little flower-maker like a booby, nor could I pass incessantly back and forth before her. But the moment was approaching when I might squeeze her little fingers, press her hands very tenderly in mine. Long live the dance! for lovers' sake, say I; one need not be afraid to show his secret feelings, one can declare his passion without speaking. I believe that this is partly the reason why all young damsels have such an inclination for this exercise, and enjoy going to balls so much. How many vows are made and returned in forming a ladies' chain or setting to partners; and in spite of their keen watchfulness the mammas do not know how to prevent this.

But the time was passing, and I was about to approach my partner. By Jove! What sound was that? What a deafening noise and what a confusion in the garden. It was a bomb they were letting off; and everybody ran towards the big square in the middle of the gardens, dragging their chairs after them, or carrying them on their arms. "It's the fireworks! It's the fireworks!" was repeated on every hand. And how they hurried. One would have thought that these people had never seen fireworks in their lives. How they

rushed and jostled, each trying to be first! What a tumult! But what had become of Caroline? I ran to the dancing ground, but it was deserted; those who had occupied it had abandoned it for the fireworks, and in the place where my pretty grisette had been seated I saw only two men disputing the possession of a chair which they were pulling different ways, ending by each carrying off half — which must have been of great service to them. I seemed unfortunate in regard to Mademoiselle Caroline, who had a trick of vanishing just as I thought I was about to get into communication with her. However, I did not quite lose hope; she was at the fireworks, I would try to find her there.

I went towards the place where the crowd had gathered; but at the sight of this mob, of which one part hid the other, for some were standing on their chairs and the others were holding on to the backs of them, I felt it would be folly to look for anyone there. I must await the termination of the fireworks; perhaps she would return to the dancing ground, then I should see her. While awaiting this event, I walked around among the spectators, and managed to see nearly as much as those mounted on the chairs. I saw several couples also, who, instead of coming towards the crowd, went off and eclipsed themselves in the gloom of the shrubbery; it was very certain that these people had not come to Tivoli to see the fireworks;

but I am sure that they had awaited them with impatience and that they enjoyed themselves as much in their dual solitude as those who watched them with their noses turned skyward.

They were displaying a pyrotechnical scene — Ixion struck by lightning from the hand of Jupiter. I heard a gentleman who was supporting his spouse and holding up his little girl — who shrieked at every explosion, while her little brother hid under the chairs — explain the pantomime to his family.

"Who's that big man in the red cloak that's riding on a bird?" asked the little one.

"It's Jupiter, my child; he's riding a bird of Paradise."

"And what's that stick he's holding in his hand?"

"It's the lightning to strike the men who are not good."

"Oh, yes; that's like my school teacher's taws."

"And who was this Ixion, my dear," asked his wife.

"He was a Roman, I think. Wait, I remember now; he was the one who wished to drive Jupiter's chariot. You'll see presently; he'll be struck by lightning."

"What does that mean, my dear," pointing to the piece as it changed.

"It means that when they throw him in that big hole, he's in hell, and once he's there — "

"Oh, yes, I understand, he'll be struck with lightning; that's correct."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I am afraid," cried the little boy, who was hiding under the chairs.

"Be quiet, Octave; if you move about like that, you'll upset us all. I won't bring you to Tivoli again, you are such a little coward. Fie, for shame! a big boy nine years old, who plays every day with my National Guard's cap, and who's afraid to look at a few fireworks."

At this moment something went off with a great bang and Octave gave a jump that overturned his mamma's chair; the good lady fell, bringing down with her her husband and the little girl, who in trying to save herself caught hold of the tail of a gentleman's coat, and the said coat being very rotten it yielded to the shock and the portion seized remained in the little girl's hand, while the gentleman cried, "Thief!" thinking someone had stolen his handkerchief, which he could not find in his pocket. At the same moment a more violent and prolonged detonation rent the air; a thousand fiery objects darted about, crossed each other, and curved their serpentine lengths, dazzling the eyes, spreading around for a moment a sort of magic daylight, an extraordinary sun in the gardens which they seemed to wish to enfold in their brilliancy; but this noise, this brilliant imitation sunlight, lasted only for a few moments; some sparks, some sticks, and other refuse from the expended fire-

works were all that fell into the gardens, often on to the spectators, frightening and scattering them. I saw one lady whose bonnet was burned, another whose shawl was peppered with little holes by the sparks from a squib; and it seemed to me that watching fireworks might prove an expensive amusement.

I got away, thankful that I escaped damage in the spattering of the pyrotechnical fragments, but very greatly surprised that I had not seen my neighbor Raymond in some transparency; for, having lost sight of him among the fireworks, I had fully expected to see him figure in the display.

I went back to the dancing-ground, but the lady I had asked to dance was not there. I must renounce the hope, then, of seeing Caroline; I let the crowd of good citizens pass, who, as soon as the fireworks were over, returned to their homes, content at having taken their weekly modicum of pleasure. I walked at haphazard in the paths where the colored glasses threw only an uncertain light. Presently, I heard a little hand-bell; and although the boisterous laughter of some young men, the whispering of some ladies, and the distant sound of the dance deprived me of all illusion regarding the hermitage, I mounted towards the dwelling of the so-called sorcerer, who, by means of a wand, a long beard, a steeple-crowned hat, a gray gown and a horn three feet long, looked very

imposing, and offered to tell one's fortune at a very moderate price.

Young girls have always a leaning towards fortune telling. Those who are novices in love ardently desire to learn if it will be the big, handsome dark fellow or the small, fair man who will be their husband; and others, who are not at all concerned as to whether their present lovers are faithful, desire to know if any one else is in love with them; the pretty ones are sure that they will make conquests, the plain ones delude themselves into the belief that they will. Desire lends hope to all, and each one is content.

I was agreeably surprised at seeing my young flower-maker, who was awaiting her turn to get her fortune told. I drew near to her, she saw me and blushed; that was a good sign. But her aunt and M. Jules were beside her, I could not expect to speak to her. An idea came to me while the fortune-teller was engaged with the young girl who accompanied Caroline; I pulled out my note-book (a far-sighted bachelor always carries one), I drew back under a lamp, and scribbled with my pencil a loving and passionate declaration, which was not at all in accord with common sense but which I was sure would flatter the little thing. I threaded my way among the curious bystanders, and edged my way to the magician. Caroline had taken her friend's place, and the magic horn was already applied to his ear; I pulled the sorcerer's robe, and

showed him my note, upon which I had put a hundred sous piece; he stretched out his hand and seized it — these people easily understand one's meaning. All this was done without any one's noticing anything. He said an infinity of flattering things to Mademoiselle Caroline, no doubt; for she laughed a good deal, though at times she appeared troubled, surprised, and glanced furtively at me. I could have wagered that the sorcerer had spoken to her of me. That man understood his trade thoroughly; I recommend him to the ladies. At length, the magician took the young girl's hand to read her palm, and then, slipping my note into it, bade her defer the reading of it until she was going to bed. I think mademoiselle understood him, for she thrust the paper into her bosom before she rejoined her aunt. At last I saw her departing with all her company, and I was no further advanced. I had an idea that my hermit would tell me all that I wanted to know; for he had spoken low to the little thing and she had often answered by means of the horn.

My man came up to me and invited me to enter his hermitage, and without waiting for me to question him he immediately opened the subject.

"She's called Caroline."

"I know it."

"She's a flower-maker."

"I know that, also."

"She is eighteen years old."

"I fully believe it."

"She has no lover."

"I had hoped so."

"She wishes to remain virtuous."

"I have my doubts as to that."

"She has noticed you."

"I can conceive it."

"You please her."

"I desire to do so."

"She works in the Rue Saint-Appoline, from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening."

"I don't want to know anything further."

I recompensed this precious diviner and went down again into the gardens which were almost empty, and I walked along the road which led to the exit, delighted at knowing where Mademoiselle Caroline worked.

As I passed the silhouette booth it seemed to me that I heard a familiar voice. They were disputing in the little oiled-paper closet, and I recognized my neighbor Raymond's voice. What the devil was he doing there? I listened; the silhouette maker was now speaking,—

"Monsieur, it is half-past eleven; everybody is gone, and I must shut up my shop also."

"One more silhouette, my friend, then I'll go."

"Why, monsieur, you've been for two hours now in my place, and I've already cut you out seventeen times."

"What of that! This will be the eighteenth. Oh, I can't have too many of my portraits — I shall know what to do with them. They're asking me for them everywhere."

"Monsieur, I tell you I must close my shop."

"Close it if you like, I shall stay inside; I don't want to go out yet."

"You shall go, monsieur."

"Make me another silhouette."

"No, monsieur, I can't do it!"

I could not refrain from bursting into a shout of laughter at hearing Raymond's resolution; for fear of being arrested for some of the idiocies he had committed during the evening he had gone to hide in the silhouette gallery, which he was bound not to leave at any price. But my voice disturbed my neighbor's mind.

"Wait," said he to the scissors artist, "do you hear that? There's somebody near us; you told me everybody had left the gardens."

"Monsieur, pay me and get out of it yourself, or I'll go and look for the officer to put you out."

The mention of the officer made Raymond shudder, he felt he must leave the shelter of the booth; but before venturing into the garden he put his head outside the door to see that no one was watching for him. The first person he perceived was your humble servant, who at the sight of his neighbor's pale and disordered countenance felt his desire for laughter redoubled. Raymond,

when he saw me, was undecided whether he ought not still to hide; but he made up his mind, and, quite sure that I would not take advantage of his unfortunate situation, he caught hold of me as the anchor of his salvation.

"My dear M. Dorsan, — how pleased I am to meet you. If you did but know all that has happened to me this evening in this cursed garden!"

"Oh, I do know; it made enough racket."

"My God! do they mean to arrest me?"

"Why, it's quite possible they do. The man you wounded is very bad, and the young men whose clothes you have spoiled have gathered at the entrance gate; the damage you committed in the garden was considerable, and —"

"Oh, how unfortunate I am!"

And Raymond went back into the silhouette gallery in defiance of the proprietor, who took him by the coat to put him outside.

"Save me, neighbor, my only hope is in you."

"Well, I will do so, although last night you played me a very mean trick."

"Oh, I swear to you — I assure you, it was merely chance. I'll take back all that I said, if that will please you. I'll even say the young girl passed the night in my rooms."

"Do nothing of the kind, if you please, M. Raymond; take care that you never speak of her. But begin by getting out of this profile shop, and follow me."

"I ask nothing better, my dear neighbor. Give me my portraits; how much are the silhouettes?"

"Seventeen, at forty sous a piece, will come to exactly thirty-four francs, monsieur."

"The devil! that's rather a high price."

"It's what I always charge."

"Come," said I to Raymond, whose piteous face didn't look worth thirty-four francs at that moment, "you have there what will make a good many people happy; it's a small compensation."

Raymond demurred no longer; he paid with a sigh and, seizing my arm, entreated me to protect him.

"Nothing would please me better than to do so," said I to him; "but you must acknowledge that I can't resist, single-handed, the fifty or so young men who are waiting for you at the exit, and who seemed determined to do you some injury."

"Yes, yes, I know it; I can't pass the night here, however, and minus a hat, too; I shall get a cold in my head, and tomorrow night I have to sing the song of 'Joconde' at an amateur musicale."

"That's very tiresome. Will you risk going out by the gate?"

"No, most assuredly not. These young fellows are very brutal when their tempers are up."

"Then I see nothing for it but to scale the walls."

" But if someone should take me for a thief?"

" Don't be afraid, I have a plan — come along."

We chose the darkest paths, and Raymond followed me, trembling with apprehension. I led him up to the walls of the Rue de Clichy, and made him sit down on the ground behind a hornbeam tree.

" Stay there, I will go out of the garden and round to the Rue de Clichy; I'll come up to this wall, I'll wait for a favorable moment when you can get down without danger, and I'll give you the signal."

" What signal will you give me?"

" I'll clap my hands twice."

" Agreed! The wall's rather high, — but still, rather than be beaten to death,— there's nothing to do but to take the risk."

" Good-by. Have patience; don't make the least sound, don't stir, and listen for the signal."

" Oh, I shall be careful not to miss it, you may be sure. You couldn't lend me your hat, could you?"

" That's impossible; I have to sing a duet tomorrow."

" Then I must put my handkerchief over my head."

" The best thing you can do."

" Oh, if any one at the gate should ask you about me, you'll tell them I've gone?"

" That's understood."

"Don't leave me here any longer than you can help."

"As long as I see any one prowling about it's no use for me to signal you, you understand that."

"My dear Dorsan, I'm infinitely obliged to you."

"Good-by; I'll look out for you."

I went off, laughing at Raymond's position and at his cowardice. I left the garden at last and it was time, for they were about to close the gates; I glanced in passing at the Rue de Clichy, where my neighbor fondly thought I was playing the sentinel over his safety, and turned towards my dwelling, leaving that dear Raymond awaiting my signal. His conduct of the evening before well merited this little revenge; besides, prompt measures are always best.

CHAPTER VII

By the Light of the Moon. Vexatious

Laughing heartily at Raymond's dismal plight, at his prolonged fright, and at the ridiculous adventures in which he had played such a sorry part, and prolonging my laughter as I thought of the figure he would cut in waiting for me, I continued on my way, congratulating myself on the success of my little trick.

But my thoughts soon reverted to a far more pleasing subject; I mused on the charming Caroline. I did not doubt but that she had read my note by this time and I made up my mind that tomorrow I would go to the charming little flower-maker's shop to meet her, and then I should no doubt learn how far my hopes were to have their fruition.

No doubt this project was far from moral; here was I seeking to lure a young girl from the paths of virtue to gratify a momentary caprice — but what will you have? I had many erroneous conceptions, some of them, without doubt, deficient from a moral standpoint and among them the fixed idea that bachelors were put into the world to make love to the girls, and that it behooved those

of the latter who wished to remain virtuous, like Nicette, to resist the wiles of assiduous flatterers.

While dreaming thus, I reached home. The way had seemed short to me, the evening was delightfully fine and the moon at least as beautiful as on the evening before; but tonight I was not looking at the sky. I was about to knock when a person who was sitting on a stone bench near the entrance gate quickly arose and came towards me.

"Oh, is that you, M. Dorsan? I was waiting for you."

I recognized my little flower-seller, whom the sight of Mademoiselle Caroline had banished from my memory. That she had not forgotten me was evident, or she would not have been waiting for me in the street at this hour, for it was near midnight.

"How long have you been here, Nicette?"

"Since nine o'clock, monsieur."

"And why have you been waiting for me all this time?"

"Oh, monsieur, forgive me, but I could not keep away; I wanted to thank you again, and to tell you what I did with the money you gave me."

"My dear girl, that wasn't at all necessary; I am sure you made good use of it."

"You're angry because I waited for you, monsieur, aren't you? Well, then, I will go away."

I could hear by the tone of her voice that she was ready to cry. Had I spoken too harshly to her. She was going off with a full heart, but I took her hand and detained her. She sighed deeply. Poor Nicette, was that sigh for me? If so, I felt sorry for it, for I knew that I was not worthy to be loved by a pure sensitive heart like Nicette's, and yet I wished that she should love me, and that she should be faithful to me; figure that all out, if you can.

"Come, now, my dear Nicette, tell me all that you've done since yesterday."

"It won't bother you then, monsieur?"

"Not a bit of it; am I not interested in all that concerns you?"

"Oh, monsieur, how good you are — if you knew all I feel; well, first of all, I went to my mother's; because, after all, she is my mother, and although she did turn me out, I owe her some respect."

"That's correct; you did quite right. And how did Madame Jerome receive you?"

"Very badly, monsieur, very badly, indeed; she didn't even ask me where I had passed the night. However, she said if I would marry Beauvisage, she would forgive what she called my 'pranks'; now, monsieur, did I cut up any pranks with you?"

"Certainly not; and what followed?"

"Why, I refused; for so far as the marriage is

concerned, I am stubbornness itself. Then she beat me again, and this time you were not there to prevent it."

I could not help smiling at Nicette's naïveté, which recalled to my mind the tremendous slap in the face I received instead of her; but Madame Jerome's hardheartedness appalled me; to turn her daughter out of her house, to strike her so brutally, and to leave her entirely without resources at an age when the easiest and sometimes the only way of obtaining them is by sacrificing all that a woman holds most dear. Oh, there are some mothers unworthy of that sacred name!

"And after that, Nicette?"

"Well, then, monsieur, I packed up my things and left the house without seeing my sister, who didn't dare to show herself before me; and I said to myself, 'I'm not going to grieve over it, I have nothing to reproach myself with. I refused the pork-butcher, it is true; but where one's whole future is involved, one has a right to do as one pleases.' And then I left the house with my little bundle; I don't know how it happened, but as I walked along I found myself in your street, monsieur. I looked for a small room, and I've rented one near by in the Rue Saint-Honoré, just off the boulevard. I've bought a bed and a chair — that's all that I need. Tomorrow I shall have a table for my bouquets, and as for flowers, I know where to get those. I shall establish myself there

on the boulevard, at the corner of the street, and when you need flowers, monsieur, I shall be near your house, and it will be very easy for you to let me know. Have I managed well, monsieur?"

Nicette had finished speaking, but I remained silent. I was greatly touched by her attachment; she had wished to be near me, I had easily fathomed that; and the manner in which she had told me was so ingenuous, so simple, that it really seemed as though in acting thus she had only done her duty.

"You don't say anything to me, monsieur; are you vexed that I left my own neighborhood to come — into this one? If you are, tomorrow I will look for another room a long way off, yes, quite in another part, where you will never be likely to meet me."

"What are you talking about? I vexed because you are near me; it's very unkind of you, Nicette, to say that of me. I thought I had proved to you the interest I take in you."

"Oh, forgive me, M. Dorsan, but I thought that perhaps I ought to have asked your leave first — you are my protector — "

"Be quiet, you silly child! I am very much pleased at your lodging in this neighborhood. We shall often meet, I dare say, and I shall always be glad to see you."

"Yes, monsieur, and I shall be glad, too. But I shan't take such a liberty again as to wait at your

door; I only did so today that I might tell you what I had done and where I am living now."

"You need no excuses, my dear; I am very pleased to see you. Oh, Nicette, what a delightful and yet cruel night I passed near you; I shan't forget it as long as I live. I feel that I should not dare to venture it a second time!"

"We won't say any more about that, M. Dorsan. I am going home now, it is very late and I am keeping you up; but really this is the last time it will happen."

"Dear Nicette, your charming person, your winning ways, your grace, your pleasing frankness, will always be with me in that chamber, where I should like to see you again."

"Oh, M. Dorsan, don't say that, I beg of you. You are too far above me—a poor flower-girl."

"Well, Nicette, if you wished, you could—"

"Good-by, M. Dorsan, good-by."

She said good-by, but she did not go. I held one of her hands; she repulsed me and yet she attracted me at the same time. My eyes were fixed on hers; we said nothing further, but my entrance door was open and I think Nicette would yet have followed me, when sudden shouts dispelled the charm. A man came running along, shouting "Thief." Nicette disengaged her hand from mine, bade me a loving good-night, and withdrew. I tried to detain her — but she was already at some distance from me.

I knocked at my door; the man who was running, and whom I had taken to be some drunken fellow, dashed through the door as I entered and tumbled over in the court, crying,—

"At last I am safe!"

I had recognized Raymond's voice, and I was curious to learn what else had happened to him. The portress, who had heard the noise, came with a light, and we saw Raymond, whose trousers were torn from belt to knee, and who, gasping with fatigue, was extended at full length in the court, to recover his breath.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Madame Dupont, "what has happened to you, M. Raymond? Why, you are in a sad state."

"Why it's you, is it?" said I, in my turn; "and why did you leave Tivoli without awaiting my signal?"

"Your signal, indeed! it seems to me I might have waited a long time for your signal!"

"You are too impatient."

"I had remained for an hour in hiding, and then I saw some men who were making the rounds of the garden. I was seized with fear, and I decided to climb over the wall; but in doing so I got caught in some broken glass, and tore my trousers, and I've hurt my spine. In the Rue Mont-Blanc some drunken men insulted me and I'm almost sure they wanted to rob me, so I made off, calling for help, and, God be thanked, here

I am, safe in port at last; but I've got something to remember Tivoli by."

"Monsieur," said Madame Dupont, "you must bathe your back with goularde water."

"Yes, that's what I shall do tomorrow morning."

"At least," said I, "I hope you have your silhouettes safe."

"I think I lost some of them getting down from the wall."

"The devil you did! Well, that'll be all the worse for you, for it's evidence against you, and your profile will enable them to find you. I'd advise you to wear spectacles and a false nose for a fortnight to come."

My neighbor, who knew that I was making game of him, took his candle and went hobbling upstairs without saying another word. When we reached our landing I bowed smilingly, and went into my room, where I slept peacefully enough. As Sancho Panza said of the days, "The nights follow, but they do not resemble each other."

My first thoughts on awakening were of my two young girls. I cannot say which of them, Nicette or Caroline, first presented herself to my mind; I know that I found both of them very pleasing; but Nicette was virtuous and wished to remain so, and up to the present I had acted well towards her in trying not to undo the good I had done. I could only be her friend, and that was for me a novel position in regard to a woman.

As for Mademoiselle Caroline, I judged differently of her; I did not believe her to be so innocent and guileless as she appeared, and her little confiding airs with M. Jules did not deceive me. She was looking for a husband, but she did not love the poor fellow; if she had loved him would she have listened smilingly to all the nonsense I had talked to her? If she had loved him would she have danced with others? Mademoiselle Caroline was very coquettish, and I believed rather tricky. However, she had not received my advances very favorably the night I had followed her in the street; she was, I admit, rather ill-tempered on that occasion because I had crushed the flowers she had made to wear on her visit to Tivoli the next evening, which was at the moment more interesting than a conquest, since it would procure her a thousand of them. But I should know by and by what chance there was for me.

At noon I went to the address given to me by the sorcerer. He had spoken the truth, and among several pretty chits I perceived my charming dancer. All these damsels lowered their lashes at the sight of a young man, but they all looked at me from beneath them. Caroline recognized me; I could see that she was embarrassed by the way in which she looked at me and the assiduity with which she applied herself to her work, the better to hide her agitation. It was highly necessary that I should appear to have

come to the shop for something; I asked for some bunches of flowers, some wreaths and other ornaments. They showed me some of each, but it was a young man who was so complaisant as to spread out for my inspection all that was newest in his shop, and the damsels did not stir from their places.

This was not at all what I wanted, but I saw I must end the matter; so I bought fifty francs' worth of artificial flowers, which I paid for on the spot and left my address, asking that they should be sent there that day because I was going into the country on the ensuing one. They promised to send them, and I departed. Caroline ought to understand me; but would she come herself? Ah, that I didn't know.

I went back to my chambers and, warning the portress that I was expecting some purchases I had made, and that the bearer was to bring them up to my door, I went to my apartments, where I grew impatient, as do all young men expecting a first meeting; as do all young girls whose mammas keep them at home when they are aching to go out. An hour passed, nobody came. Another hour had almost gone, and I was thinking of returning to the shop when some one rang my bell. I jumped to it and opened it — and there was my neighbor Raymond standing before me, loaded with an immense cardboard box.

"What do you want with me, M. Raymond!"

"Neighbor, I greet you!"

"But what do you come here for, I pray?"

"I'll explain that to you — but let me come in and get rid of this box."

And without awaiting my answer he came into my antechamber and seated himself on a chair. I remained standing in front of him, hoping I should get rid of him quicker thus.

"Pardon me for making myself at home, but my back is still very bad. That was a devilish high wall."

"What do you want. I beg of you to tell me without any further preamble, for I am much pressed for time."

"Well, here goes. First of all, I want to make my peace with you, because there shouldn't be any ill-will between neighbors."

"Good heavens! I've nothing against you."

"Well, if you haven't, I'm delighted; there, that's all done with! I was seeking an occasion to come and speak to you; one came right to my door and I seized it. Some one rang just now at my bell and asked for you."

"What! Just now?—and who was it?"

"A young girl — rather pretty, by the way, but not as pretty as the one who was here yesterday."

"A young girl?—and what did she want? Come, make an end of it."

"She brought that box for you and had no further message."

"Well, where is she? What did you say to her?"

"I took charge of the box, saying that you were out, in order that I might have the pleasure of handing it to you myself and making my peace with you."

"Good heavens! is it possible? What! must you always be meddling in other people's affairs, no wonder you make me swear. I'll wager it was she herself."

I opened the box, Raymond looking at me in surprise, not knowing what to make of it when he saw my eyes flashing with anger, for he expected merely to receive my thanks. I found all the flowers I had bought, and in my fury I kicked the box as high as I could, the bunches and garlands flew into the air, and a wreath composed of various flowers dropped on to Raymond's brow, who dared not take it off because my fit of anger had stupefied him. After raging furiously and crumpling and tearing my flowers, I threw myself into an armchair and my gaze fell on my neighbor; then my anger was dissipated, for it was impossible to keep serious when I saw Raymond, crowned and rolling his eyes affrightedly around him. I burst into a shout of laughter which had the effect of so far reassuring him that he imitated me as the best means of conciliation, though his laughter was so forced as to resemble rather a grimace, and was not at all like

that unextinguishable laughter which the gods indulged in when Vulcan poured for them to drink. But then

Le lecteur ne s'attendait guère
A voir Vulcan dans cette affaire.

"Well," said M. Raymond at length, trying to smile once more, "it seems to me that your anger has evaporated."

"It's necessary to resign one's self to the inevitable."

"But what made you so angry?—aren't you pleased with the goods they sent you?"

"It's a question of goods, indeed! M. Raymond, you will force me to move."

"Me, neighbor! Why, how can that be?"

"Because you seem to be placed beside me on purpose to circumvent all my plans. I should like to send you to the devil."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"When anyone rings at your door in mistake, why don't you send them to me? Why did you tell them I was not in when I was in? Why did you assume charge of this box when I wanted to speak to the person who brought it?"

"My dear neighbor, I'm greatly distressed, I was not aware—"

"I beg and entreat you, M. Raymond not to mix yourself up any more in my affairs, or we shall have a serious quarrel; you have quite sufficient occupation in listening to the cackle of the

cooks, in watching the women, spying on the little girls, and interfering in the household quarrels, without making yourself uneasy about me."

"Neighbor, I assure you that some one has damaged me in your estimation; I am incapable of such conduct as you suppose. I like to joke — that's all; but I never make gossip. In the first place, I'm not talkative. If I were, I could have told you that the lady on the first floor has two lovers, and that her husband keeps a mistress in town; that M. Gerard on the second floor is involved in his business affairs, for I've seen summonses left for him with the portress; that Madame Bertin employs her evenings in trying to find husbands for her daughters; that the cook knows how to make her market pennies — and that she has a lover at the end of the court to whom she carries soup; that the little clerk Gerville runs into debt and doesn't answer when his creditors come dunning to his door, and a thousand other things. But all that doesn't concern me; I have business of my own without attending to that of other people. I took that box thinking to oblige you, and for the sake of being useful to you; you are displeased by that, and the matter is ended. Hereafter, I shall send the persons who call to you, even though I know you are out. I'll say good-day to you, neighbor."

"Wait, just another word, if you please. What was the young girl like who brought the box?"

"Why, good-looking — that's to say, she was pleasing."

"How tall was she?"

"Oh, middle height."

"Was her hair brown?"

"Yes, brown, or rather chestnut."

"And black eyes."

"Yes, that is to say, they were dark gray."

"Oh, then it was she."

"Who is 'she'?"

"That, Monsieur Raymond, doesn't concern you in the least."

"That is true, I only asked inadvertently. Good-by, then. But tell me, aren't you going to Madame Vauvert's this evening? There is a big party, a concert, and perhaps a ball. I think there'll be a good many people there. I shall sing the song from 'Joconde.' M. Vauvert told me they were going to have a young girl who is highly proficient on the guitar, and a gentleman who sings Italian like an opera singer."

"What an enticing program."

"I think Madame Bertin is going with her young ladies. The youngest has been practising a piece which she is to play on the piano. But time is running on, and I've a thousand errands to do. Well, good-day again, neighbor. I've promised Vauvert to take with me a 'cello and a tenor violin to complete his quartet. I must go and find my amateurs."

He was gone at last, this confounded fellow who had prevented me from seeing Caroline, for I had no doubt that it was she who had brought the box. What should I do now? — return to the shop? What could I say? I hadn't the least idea, but I did not wish to have uselessly filled my room with artificial flowers, so I went back to the Rue Saint-Appoline.

The master of the establishment was out, which afforded me great satisfaction, so I loudly complained that they had not sent my flowers home. A damsel rose and asserted that she had herself conveyed them, and had just left them at my house. It was not Caroline; therefore, Caroline was not the one who had called. I calmed down and threw all the blame upon my neighbor, for the lady in charge was scolding the damsel. I purchased some garlands which I pretended to have forgotten the day before, and begged that they might be sent with me. This time Caroline was chosen to come with me and at last I should be able to speak freely to her, and to be alone with her. Wait a bit, I had not reached that point yet, I felt I mustn't congratulate myself in advance; one is so often deceived.

Mademoiselle Caroline walked with lowered eyes; I kept at a respectful distance, but when we had got a little way from the shop I called a cab to take us home. The young girl was at first averse to entering the vehicle, but I pressed her,

and at length she decided to do so; once there, she was obliged to listen to all that love inspired me to say, if one could apply the word love to the mad folly which had occupied me since the evening before.

But obstacles lend a fictitious value to the slightest fancy, and from a mere caprice is sometimes born a deep and lasting passion. The difficulties I had encountered in obtaining a conversation with Caroline enhanced the charm of being with her; my speech was more ardent, more eloquent because of it, and so little is needed to convince a young girl whose heart is already half smitten.

All this made me hope for speedy and complete success. However, the cab stopped, we alighted, and Mademoiselle Caroline gave me the box and declined to go up with me. In vain I tried to reassure her, and to combat her resolution; nothing I could say would vanquish the obstinacy of the flower-maker, and the most that I could obtain from her was a promise to meet me on the boulevard on the evening of the next day. She then left me, and I went indoors alone; but I could not help reflecting on the difference between the conduct of Mademoiselle Caroline and that of Nicette. At night, hardly knowing me, the little flower-girl had herself asked to accompany me home; and in the middle of the day, having a good reason for going to my rooms, the flower-maker feared to accompany me there. What was I to conclude

from this? — That the one knew her danger better than the other? No; Nicette understood, but she was not thinking of it, she trusted herself with me. That Caroline was more virtuous than Nicette? — It was not possible for her to be more so; I feared that she was less so, and that the difference which existed in their bunches of flowers existed also in their virtue.

I would await the rendezvous to settle this and other questions, and in the interim I would go in the evening to M. Vauvert's, not to hear Raymond sing the air of "Joconde," but because I always found there an original gathering which afforded me considerable amusement apart from the master and mistress of the house, whose concert deserves a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

An Amateur Concert

In the mighty maelstrom called Paris are held social gatherings in such diversity as to suit all tastes, all conditions, all occupations, all opinions, and all classes.

A young man who is well bred and has some knowledge of the world and of the manners and habits of cultivated people, can go anywhere. Nothing is easier for such as these than to gain admission to grand parties, brilliant fêtes, or to balls on such a magnificent scale that one is lost in the crowd. At such entertainments as these the master and mistress of the house do not, as a usual thing, know the names of half their guests. And, as is well known, it is customary in the best society to present anybody one desires, without asking permission.

The guests as they arrive go to pay their respects to their host and hostess, with whom they exchange a few conventional words, smile affably, and pass on; they have done all that is necessary, all that the occasion calls for, and may play cards, dance and refresh themselves without paying any further attention to their host and hostess.

It is not quite as easy to obtain admission into what is termed middle-class society. There the master of a house, a trifle more exacting than the marquis or the banker of the Chaussée-d'Antin, likes to know the people who come to his home. When one young man presents another to him, he inquires as to the latter's name, his occupation, his character; he pushes this to such a ridiculous extreme as to look very coldly on any young man whose manners are not staid enough to suit him. But this extreme severity of manners is found only in the Marais and at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Between the highest classes and the middle classes, between etiquette and license, one finds a sort of stratum, composed of agreeable circles where a pleasing freedom from restraint, a frank gayety, and a sweet intimacy reign; it is at artists' houses usually that one finds all these things, the arts take each other by the hand. Those who really possess talent are never jealous one of the other; they esteem each other, seek each other and appreciate each other, and that is why one may always find at their gatherings wit without malice, jokes that have no sting, rivalries without envy, merit without conceit, and fortune that has no pretension.

Then, last of all, there are those strange gatherings which are a medley of all the others. These take place at the houses of people who do not

understand how to entertain properly, but who wish to do so lavishly because it is good form to give evening parties, and nobody today can think for a moment of being outdone by his neighbor. As for me, my habit is to go only where I am invited personally. I do not care to present myself at those crowded entertainments where people go as though it were to the play, and where I cannot return without being taxed with impoliteness because my hosts had not noticed that I was there on the previous occasion.

Madame Vauvert's parties may be classed in the kind of gatherings I have just mentioned. The master of the house imagined himself to be a musician, though he could not for the life of him beat time to a tune in trois-temps or observe a half note nor a rest, although, in order to do so, he used his hands, his feet, and his head. However, he played the guitar a little, and when he could accompany a simple song without encountering a pause or a rest on his way he was the happiest of men. Add to this a permanent and extensive admiration for the fair sex, to whom he paid assiduous court in spite of his wife; a nose which always exhibited traces of snuff, dirty clothing and linen, a strong breath and ogling eyes; add also that he was of middle height, and you will have some idea of M. Vauvert, a very good fellow despite his little defects, and whose greatest fault was that at forty-five he was neither correct nor settled in his

habits. Gayety belongs to all ages; but rakishness is very different.

> If there is a time for folly,
> There is also one for reason.

And I may well hope at forty years to be virtuous enough, because I am already rather so now. But we must come to Madame Vauvert.

She had been good-looking; the worst of it was that she still wished to be considered so. Her color was fresh and ruddy, even when she was ill, which caused it to be said by evil tongues that she manufactured it herself; she was but slightly acquainted with the usages of society, but, on the other hand, she was very inquisitive and had an extraordinary talent for setting everybody by the ears without appearing to speak ill of anybody, and had, furthermore, a decided liking for handsome bachelors and for chocolate.

Madame Vauvert's home was, however, a place where one could obtain a good deal of amusement, because there was an utter lack of restraint and every one did as he pleased, and because, also, one met there a number of very original people, and every evening one was sure to see some new faces. The greater part of those who presented themselves merely passed like the slides in a magic lantern; those who asked nothing better than to laugh came and came again. I was of that number; in fact, Vauvert called me his dear friend, and his wife smiled graciously upon me.

As M. Vauvert was but a simple government clerk he did not live on the first floor; but on the evenings that he had parties he placed candle ends all along his staircase, in order that the musicians and amateurs should not damage their noses before they reached his domicile on the third floor above the entrance. He kept no servant, but he had a nephew some fourteen or fifteen years old, a mischievous, sneaky imp, who was half errand boy, half clerk to a lawyer; the dear uncle made him useful at his parties, greatly to the young man's disgust; and on such evenings he maliciously stayed later at the lawyer's that he might not have to help his uncle and aunt.

It was nearly ten o'clock when I got to M. Vauvert's, for not until that hour was the company assembled; the good burgess who wishes to ape the nobleman imagines it good form to come very late on an occasion of this sort. Amateur musicians and singers love to keep people waiting; if they go much further in that direction they will end by not arriving until the next morning.

I rang. Madame Vauvert came to the door, and from this I inferred that the little nephew had not yet come in.

"Oh, here you are, my dear Dorsan, it was very nice of you to come; we shall have a good many people this evening."

"What! you will have? Do you mean to say your guests haven't arrived yet?"

"Something has delayed them, but it is still early."

"Not so very early."

"We have a grand young lady from the conservatory, who has a very fine voice."

"The devil, you have!"

"And a lady who plays the 'cello."

"By Jove, you do things as they do them at Nicollet's. You're coming it stronger and stronger."

"How droll you are, ha, ha, ha!"

"And what have they already done in the way of music?"

"Nothing as yet."

"Do you really mean they've done nothing at all? But why are you waiting to begin your concert?"

"Little Martin hasn't come yet to accompany us on the piano."

"And isn't his sister here?"

"Yes, but she would not play this evening; she is indisposed, she has a nervous attack."

"Oh, that is too bad. But where has your husband gone?"

"He's gone to find the music for the 'cello part, and to borrow a tenor violin so they can play a quartet."

"It seems to me that he should have started a little sooner to do all that."

"Why, since dinner he has done nothing but

run here and there, the poor man. He had to go in search of Madame Rosemond and her daughter, then to take a 'cello to the musical instrument maker's; he had to see that Mademoiselle Luquet's harp was brought, and then go and make sure that M. Crachini could come — in fact, there's no end to the things he had to do."

"I can imagine they gave him plenty of occupation."

"And that rascal Friquet not in yet. I hope his uncle will make him dance this evening. But come in, my dear Dorsan."

Our conversation had taken place in a small passage which led on one side to the dining-room, which served also as a bed and dressing-room, and on the other side to the drawing-room. I entered the latter, where the usual guests and the new-comers were assembled. Everybody was asking what had become of the master and mistress of the house, whom they did not see; every one was asking for them, and inquiring why they did not begin to do something; but among the amateurs no one wanted to sing first, and the professionals did not seem more eager.

"It seems to me the thing's not going off very well to-night," said a little pock-marked gentleman, whose nose was completely overshadowed by his protuberant cheeks, and whose eyes could not be discerned beneath the glasses of his spectacles, swinging back and forth and smiling maliciously

as he spoke. "Nothing done and it's almost ten o'clock; you must acknowledge they're not treating their guests with proper respect. And that poor fellow Vauvert has passed his evening running after instruments and performers — it's comical. There isn't another house like this in Paris."

"The fact that it is unique renders it all the more precious. But aren't you going to sing yourself this evening?"

"Oh, possibly; I've bought my piece from 'Jean de Paris.' 'C'est la Princesse de Navarre.'"

"It seems to me you sang that at the last party."

"Why, so I did; but I haven't had time to learn another; and besides, it is so good! 'C'est la Princesse de Navarre que je vous annon-on--on —' ah, how pretty that is!"

"Yes, when Martin sings it; it is a delightful air. Shall we have much singing this evening?"

"Oh, we shall have a good laugh by and by; Raymond is going to sing the air from 'Joconde,' that big young lady will sing the obligato song from 'Montano et Stephanie,' the little girl from the conservatory has also brought a song, M. Crachini is going to put us to sleep with a few ballads, and then Chamonin and his friend are going to venture a comic duet. I hope they're here — provided Gripaille doesn't accompany them on his guitar, for then the thing will be ruined."

As the little chubby-cheeked man ended, Gripaille drew near him, and the former said,—

"Well, now, my dear Gripaille, aren't we to have the pleasure of hearing you to-night? Come, get your guitar, the ladies are dying to hear your chords."

Gripaille, who believed himself the first guitarist in Paris, answered as he rolled a killing eye at the ladies who surrounded us,—

"What the devil do you want me to sing? I don't know anything; I've got a cold, and Vauvert's guitar is such a bad one, a veritable chestnut stove. One can't play on it."

"With your talent you could get music from anything," said an elderly spinster, turning in her chair and clasping her hands, while tears of pleasure came into her eyes. "Oh, Gripaille, oh, my friend! how many happy hours have you caused me to pass! Music has such an effect on me — an immense effect, you can't have any idea of it. I have such sensitive nerves that I entirely succumb to melody. Take your guitar, enchanter! take it, and make me dream; you remind me of a handsome traveller, who, when I was young, played one under my windows."

We managed to get away, the chubby-cheeked gentleman and myself, that we might not laugh in the face of the little dame, from whom Gripaille had much trouble in disengaging himself. Old age is certainly very worthy of respect, but it is difficult to remain serious before those old fools who go into raptures over a ballad or an adagio.

I saw the old gentleman who ordinarily played the 'cello in these string quartets look furtively at his watch, and heard him mutter between his teeth,—

"It's really exceedingly tiresome, I must be back at home by eleven o'clock, and we're wasting our time here doing nothing. I've been in the house since seven o'clock. They must have been making game of me when they said we should begin early, and that we had all the instruments for a quartet, but they won't do it again and they won't get me here again, either."

At length M. Vauvert came in all out of breath, puffing and blowing, dripping with perspiration and bending beneath the weight of a tenor violin and several heavy music books.

"Here I am! Here I am!" he said, entering the drawing-room with a desperate air; "I've had a good deal of trouble to get the parties together, but at last I've made an end of it."

"You've been amusing yourself on the way," said Madame Vauvert, compressing her lips severely.

"Confound it, yes; I should think I have been amusing myself on the way. Why, I'm all in a perspiration. Gentlemen, you can commence the quartet."

"Let's begin, let's begin," said M. Pattier, the 'cellist, "we haven't much time left; but have you brought my part?"

"Yes, yes, it's here on the stand."

"Come, gentlemen, let's tune up."

The amateurs who composed the quartet began to tune their instruments. Meanwhile, people were placing themselves, seating themselves wherever they could find a vacant chair. The ladies were grumbling already; asserting that a quartet always gave them the blues, and to avert this they chatted with the men who hung over their chairs. They whispered, they laughed, they made game of everybody, and principally of the performers, for the auditors at a musical always make the most noise whilst the music is in progress. At last the individuals who were to perform had tuned their instruments and placed themselves about the stands containing their music. The old 'cellist placed a round of green paper upon his candle that the light might not affect his eyes; the tenor violin put on his glasses, the second violin put rosin on his bow; and the first violin arranged his cravat so that his instrument would not rub against his collar.

All these preliminaries being settled (during which Vauvert endeavored to silence the assemblage by uttering prolonged hushes), the first violin raised his bow, stamped his foot, and looked around at his colleagues.

"Here we are!" said he, with an air of determination.

"Oh, I've been here for two hours past," said M. Pattier, ill-humoredly.

"One moment, gentlemen," said the second violin, "my treble string has loosened; it's a new one, I must tighten it."

The tenor violin profited by this moment to study a passage which seemed difficult to him, and the 'cellist took a pinch of snuff by way of consolation.

"All right, I'm ready," said the second violin, at length.

"Very well! Attention, gentlemen, if you please; we will play the 'allegro' very moderately and the 'adagio' rather fast; that produces the best effect."

"As you like; besides, you will beat the time."

The signal was given, and away went the first violin; the others followed some notes behind, according to their habitual custom. Although I paid but little attention to the quartet it seemed to me that it was even worse than usual.

"The knaves have sworn to flay us alive," said one of my neighbors to me.

The first violin stopped and shouted,—

"That won't do! that won't do!"

"Why it seems all right to me," said the tenor violin.

"No, no, there's something wrong."

"Well, what is it?"

"Ah, what? I don't know exactly."

"I haven't missed a note," said the second violin.

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!"

"Come, gentlemen, we must begin again."

"Well, let's begin again; but above all, you must beat the time correctly."

"It seemed to me that I beat it loud enough."

"You certainly did," said Madame Vauvert, "and the person who lives beneath us says that he shall complain to the landlord."

They began again, and did no better than before; however, the first violin played like one possessed, the company began to laugh, the players paused.

"Decidedly that won't do," said M. Louguet, the leader of the violins. "There is some mistake there. Let's see the 'cello score. What does this mean?—You're playing in B-flat and we're playing in D. By Jove, I'm not surprised!"

"I played what you told me," said M. Pattier, red with anger; "the first quartet in the first book."

"That's right — but how the devil does it happen? Let's see the title. What's this, a quartet by Mozart and we're playing a quartet by Pleyel. Ha, ha! this is a good joke."

Everybody laughed at the accident with the exception of M. Pattier, who was furious at the mistake, which was due to M. Vauvert and which prevented the execution of the quartet. He sought the master of the house, whom he found seated in a little nook in the drawing-room beside a young

brunette, upon whom he was casting very meaning looks.

"How's this, Monsieur Vauvert? You told me you'd brought the part we were lacking, and you've given me the 'cello part for a quartet by Mozart, when we were to play one by Pleyel."

"It seemed to me that I heard you say something about Mozart."

"It seemed to you! — you've no business to make such a mistake as that."

"Oh, come now, I'll go and change it."

"No, no, that's useless now; it's almost eleven o'clock; a pretty time to go looking for music! I shan't forget this trick."

Papa Pattier went off muttering; but nobody paid any attention to him. Madame Vauvert scolded her husband for his blunder; the company congratulated itself on having got rid of the quartet; while the tenor violin, who was bound not to give it up, persisted in studying passages and the most brilliant movements of his part.

My neighbor Raymond had arrived, holding his favorite piece under his arm. I noticed several new faces and I was looking for Madame Bertin and her daughters — they rarely came to M. Vauvert's, whose very mixed society was ill-suited to damsels so well brought up — when I heard a confused murmur which announced the arrival of a new personage.

I looked towards the entrance to the drawing-

room. A very elegant lady was being handed into the room by Vauvert, whose dirty dress, snuffy nose, and embarrassed manner contrasted forcibly with the grace and elegance of dress and manners of the lady for whom he sought a place in his drawing-room, where the chairs were as rare as at Tivoli. I saw one near the fireplace, on which a big cat was sleeping; I threw the cat to the floor and offered the chair to the new-comer, who accepted it and thanked me. I looked at her more attentively and recognized the lady whom I had seen on the previous evening at the theatre, and whose carriage I had vainly tried to follow. I was soon convinced that it really was she, for I saw, standing at the entrance to the drawing-room, the gentleman who had accompanied her, whom I also recognized.

Most decidedly Saturday evening would mark an epoch in my life, since chance was bringing me into contact with all the persons I had then noticed. I was Nicette's friend, and was about to become Caroline's lover; and as to this lady whose name I did not as yet know, I was willing to wager anything that we should enjoy a more ample acquaintance.

My neighbor Raymond, who lost no time when he hoped to win applause, had already approached the piano and was looking around to see if he could spy any one who could accompany his song. But M. Gripaille, who saw that no one paid any

attention to him and that no one asked him to sing, hastened to get his guitar and, seating himself in the middle of the room, prepared to begin. Singing is what always pleases most in a concert, and above all in an amateur concert, where those who play an instrument are rarely proficient enough or musical enough to afford pleasure. A quartet amuses those only who perform it; a sonata on the piano makes people yawn; variations for the harp are always too long by half; and pieces on the guitar fail of effect after other instruments. It is therefore only when there is singing that people will keep silence; a fine voice wearies neither the ear nor the attention.

But Gripaille had anything but a fine voice; on the contrary, it was a mixture of squeaking and bawling and of transitions from low to high, all accompanied by the booming of his thumb on the lower E of his guitar, while he shook his head affectedly. However, the airs he played were sometimes agreeable, and the words amusing, so his performance afforded temporary pleasure. But he sang the same pieces over and over again, until we all knew them by heart; and when he once had hold of his guitar there was no way of making him leave it. After a song came a roundelay, after the roundelay a little caprice, after the caprice a ballad, and so on. I was not wearied by all this, for I was chatting with the lady who had so lately arrived, who seemed much astonished at

everything she saw, and seemed very pleased at seeing me there; for she had recognized me, and I had seen that my presence was not disagreeable to her.

But I could hear somewhere behind me my neighbor Raymond and the little gentleman of the spectacles bemoaning themselves because Gripaille did not stop singing.

"It's frightful! it's deafening! it puts one to sleep," said Raymond, "Will he never have done."

"Oh, when once he touches the guitar it is all up with us — there's nothing for it but to let him sing!"

"And he doesn't want anybody to make a sound; nobody must speak. There, do you see how angrily he's looking over here because we're talking?"

"I don't care a fig if he is angry — it's too much altogether — the same songs he's sung to us twenty times before."

"He says he wrote them."

"That's a lie! I've seen them published under other names."

"Good heavens! I believe he's going to begin another. They should interdict this man from coming into a drawing-room."

"By Jove, yes; let's ask Vauvert to silence him."

"He dare not."

"Wait a bit! He must take a young lady to the piano; that will oblige Gripaille to yield his place."

These gentlemen betook themselves to Vauvert, who did not know what to do, or how to ask Gripaille to refrain from his efforts to amuse the company. At length, a tall, stout young lady consented to sing; little Martin had arrived to play the accompaniments; the young lady was escorted to the piano. Gripaille pretended not to see what was passing, and began the prelude to his sixth ballad; but the noise they were making in the entry, where a group of young men unable to find a place in the room were established, obliged the guitarist to abandon his labor of love; he rose in a very ill-temper, in spite of the rather perfunctory applause, and in default of anything better went to seat himself in front of the little old spinster who had been in a rapture, an ecstasy, in the heavens, during the whole time he had been singing.

"Come," said she to Gripaille, as soon as he was within speaking distance, "come and let me kiss you. You have delighted me, transported me — that's the word, and I owe you some reward."

The poor guitarist could not pass by her — so there was nothing for it but to kiss her with a good grace. Admirers are rare, but they sometimes exact a heavy price for their admiration.

My neighbor saw me; he came toward me,

holding out his hand, but he paused in front of my unknown lady and bowed ceremoniously to her. That confounded fellow Raymond knows everybody. I would listen a bit.

"Madame de Marsan, do I see you here? By what happy chance? — really, this is an unexpected pleasure. What procured this delightful surprise?"

"M. de Marsan sometimes sees M. Vauvert in the offices of the Administration, and the latter had long invited him to one of his concerts, so we decided to come today; but I confess," said she, turning towards me, "that I did not expect all that I see and hear."

"We will try, madame, to render it so agreeable to you that you will not regret coming."

And with that my neighbor drew near the piano, no doubt in order to take the big young lady's place; but the little chubby-cheeked man prevented him, and I foresaw that we could not escape the "Princesse de Navarre."

While the damsel was singing the air from "Montano et Stephanie," being obliged to yield my chair to a young person who was vainly looking for a seat, I went to get a breath of air in the antechamber, where a great number of young men, driven to flight by the piercing shrieks of the singer, had taken refuge. At that moment some one rang the bell. Vauvert opened the door, and there stood little Friquet. I expected a scene

between the uncle and nephew, and I stayed to hear it.

"Where have you been, you scamp?" said Vauvert, trying to look imposing.

"Why, uncle, I've just come from my office."

"From your office at eleven o'clock in the evening?"

"Yes, uncle."

"You don't suppose you are going to make me believe that, I hope?"

"Why not, uncle?"

"Because I happen to know that you leave the office at nine o'clock every evening."

"But uncle, the head-clerk gave me some commissions to execute."

"Some commissions — yes, and how do you do them? I've heard all about you, rascal that you are!"

"In the first place, uncle, I'm not a rascal."

"Your head-clerk told me that the day before yesterday morning, while they were waiting in the office for a deed for which they had immediate use and which you had carried somewhere to get signed, he found you quietly seated on the Pont des Arts, fishing with a line."

"Me, uncle, me! oh, what a shameful falsehood!"

"Don't dare to deny it again when I have the proofs in my possession."

"The proofs, and where are they?"

"Where are they? You just wait, M. Friquet; here is a packet of angle-worms which I found in your overcoat pocket — there now, what do you say to that?"

"Well, uncle, that doesn't prove anything? I didn't get those worms for myself."

"And for whom did you get them?"

"For my brother, who wants to go fishing on Sunday in the Canal de l'Ourcq."

"You are even more untruthful than I thought. I will wager you bought a theatre check this evening, and that you went to see the end of a melodrama."

"You know that I haven't any money, uncle."

"Oh, you're never lacking money when it's a question of the theatre or gourmandizing. Come, monsieur, fill these glasses, and go and offer these ladies something to drink."

"That's the way," muttered the little nephew, ill-temperedly, as he went off; "directly I come in I have to act as my uncle's servant. He takes me for nothing but a negro, and then in the morning my aunt will send me to get cat's meat and to bring the milk and the charcoal."

"I believe you're grumbling," said Madame Vauvert, going up to Friquet and pinching him on the arm; "there, that will teach you to sulk!"

"Ow! Aunt! it's mean to pinch me like that. I'm sure I shall have the mark of it for a week."

"So much the better."

"What a cruel beast she is," said Friquet in a low tone, and, by way of consolation, I saw him draw from his pocket a piece of cake, which he swallowed in three mouthfuls.

But the shrieks were over now, the big damsel had ceased to sing. The little chubby-faced man had taken her place, and had stubbornly set himself to warble his song of "Jean de Paris," about which the least said the better. While he was trying to lengthen out his notes, coughing at each repetition to make people think he had a cold, I saw the other singers looking at each other and making signs, yawning and compressing their lips. Really, amateurs are a great deal more malicious than professionals; and those who have the greatest need of indulgence themselves are always ready to pull others to pieces. They think to hide their own mediocrity by calling attention to their neighbor's lack of talent; the self-conceit which makes us blind to our own defects makes us seek with avidity the defects of others, as though one gained anything thereby. What foolishness! Do you suppose that the fact that M—— sings out of tune will give you a good voice? or that if he plays the violin badly it will give you a better touch on the piano? or that because some one else is plain, ill-built and ridiculous, that will make you handsome, better built and more amiable than you really are?

No, of course it won't; but it is always gratifying to find people whom one can make game of

and whom one can believe less gifted than one's self by nature. Remember how Roquelaire threw himself joyfully on the breast of a man whom he believed to be even uglier than himself. Why, monsieur, how different to your own conduct. Roquelaire abnegated his self-conceit; he knew himself for what he was. But in his place you would have made game of the one he embraced, and turning towards a mirror, you would, I wager, have found your own reflection handsome.

"The Princesse de Navarre" had been sung, and the chubby-cheeked little gentleman was walking about the room trying to cull a few eulogies, even from those whom he had just treated as though they were entirely ignorant of music, because commendation, even when undeserved, always affords its recipient pleasure. Every one praised his singing, but that was only as it should be, for in order to be polished one cannot be entirely frank. I was the single exception, for I permitted myself to remark that he appeared to have a cold; he grew as red as a turkey-cock and his nose apparently became extinct.

"That's true," he answered at last, "I have a very bad cold, which embarrassed me not a little."

"Why did you sing then?"

"My dear fellow, they pressed me so hard."

And I had seen him dispute the place with Raymond! How queer men are! But I silenced my reflections, for Raymond was about to sing,

and that would be worthy my attention. No, it was not his turn yet. Two gentlemen advanced to the piano and sang a duet, in Italian, I believe, for it was difficult to understand anything from the way in which they flopped about before the piano. One of them moved his head back and forth to mark the time, much after the fashion of a bear bobbing about behind the bars of his cage; the other, who, no doubt, was extremely short-sighted, had his nose glued to the music. The young accompanist in vain endeavored to get them to sing together, but it was impossible.

"You are too slow," said one.

"I must have skipped a line."

"Start again, then."

"You sang too fast — you hurry me too much. I've never seen the song before, and to sing in Italian off-hand is devilishly difficult."

I felt assured that this gentleman had been studying his part for a fortnight back; however, despite the most desperate efforts, they were unable to finish the duet.

"We shall sing it better next time," said M. Chamonin, "we shall feel more sure of ourselves; the thing needs studying. Rossini is so very chromatical."

"That's true," said Vauvert, taking a pinch of snuff and dispersing the greater part of it about his cravat, "it's a pity you couldn't finish it, for it seemed as if it might be pretty."

"We'll go again to the Bouffons."

"They should have stayed there," said Gripaille in a half whisper, delighted at their failure.

"I don't like Italian myself," said Madame Vauvert. "I hear nothing but 'tchi' and 'tcha' and it's not at all exhilarating."

"Why, madame, what blasphemy not to like Rossini's music."

"Who's Rossini, uncle?" demanded the little clerk, who was meandering about the room. "It seems to me I've seen the name somewhere — in 'Don Quixote,' I think."

"You little idiot! to mistake Rosinante for Rossini! Go and rinse the glasses, simpleton! and don't break into the conversation again."

At last my neighbor was at the piano, and he had already opened his mouth to an alarming extent to inform us that he had "long been a wanderer through the world," when the tuning of a 'cello was heard, and Vauvert placed a music-stand in the middle of the drawing-room.

"What are you going to do with that?" said Raymond, pausing in the midst of his confidences, "You see very well that I am singing."

"Madame Witcheritche is going to play her solo on the 'cello."

"All in good time, — I am singing now, I tell you; Madame Witcheritche can play afterwards."

"No, she wishes to play at once, because it is getting very late," and, paying no attention to

Raymond's grumblings, who angrily upset the candlestick which stood on the piano, Vauvert, having arranged the stand, went in search of the German virtuoso, whom I had not yet seen. She was a very handsome woman, fair and rather colorless, like the greater part of the Germans, but well-informed and graceful; she supported her 'cello with her knees with astonishing ease and did not appear at all intimidated; she played with facility and taste, and I saw the faces of the amateurs of the quartet lengthen, for they had not expected to encounter in a lady a talent which completely extinguished their own.

I heard a voice in my ears which incessantly repeated,—

"Goot, goot, ver' well; douch lightdly, holdt the bow firm. Goot!" I turned about and perceived a man with a villanously ugly face, who was looking alternately at the performer and at the company, making approbative grimaces and rolling his eyes in a manner which made me think of Brunet in the "Despair of Jocrisse." The owner of this singular physiognomy was a large man in a shabby green coat and of common appearance, whose pretentious manners rendered him still more ridiculous.

"Who is this personage?" I inquired of one of my neighbors.

"He's the husband of that lady who's playing the 'cello."

"What! a face like that beside her pretty one — what a shame! It's like a satyr beside a Hebe."

"The lady seems to be quite fond of her husband, however."

"One can easily see that he's a foreigner. And what occupation does this gentleman follow?"

"None; he is a baron."

"A baron! I should never have suspected it; he looks more like a shoemaker. But in Germany everybody is a baron, just as in Russia every soldier has the cross; that doesn't mean anything."

Baron Witcheritche, in rolling his eyes about, had no doubt noticed that I was looking at him, for he came up to me, and as soon as his wife had done playing sought to open the conversation with a smile. I have noticed that the Germans smile frequently. It's a pity that one cannot laugh in people's faces, for M. Witcheritche's visage was so comical, above all when he tried to do the agreeable.

"I will pet that monsir is also an amadeur blayer on the 'cello. Monsir is a ver' goot blayer, berhaps."

"I, monsieur? You are mistaken: I do not play at all."

"Oh, you gandt gedt oudt of id so. I gan readt beople's toughts in der vaces ridght avay."

"Really, you are very lucky to be able to do that, M. Witcheritche."

"I haf mate a study of der human heardt and I know id berfectly by der physsionomique."

"What did you say, Monsieur Baron?"

"I said dat I know der physsionomique."

"I don't understand you at all."

"Der physsionomique."

"Oh, you mean the physiognomy."

The baron went off without smiling at me. The very best way to get rid of a foreigner is to pretend not to understand him.

But my little dialogue with M. Witcheritche made me miss M. Crachini's ballad. I was sorry for this, for in singing he always employed a pantomime which doubly enhanced the merit of his performance. While the other amateurs were making themselves heard, I sought Raymond, for, unable to find a place near Madame de Marsan, I wished to get a little information about her, and my neighbor was the very man to give it to me.

He was not in the drawing-room, so I went into the smaller room; there my entrance put an end to a very animated whispering between M. Vauvert and a blond lady, who had been for an hour in the salle-a-manger occupied in looking for her shawl amidst a heap of bonnets, capes, and shawls lying pell-mell on the host's bed.

"Are you going to leave us already?" asked Vauvert in a tender voice, looking behind him to see if his wife was coming.

"Yes, it is late; I must get back home."

"My nephew will escort you. Friquet! Friquet!"

Friquet appeared on the scene, swearing to himself at being obliged to escort the blond lady; he took a century to look for his cap, shouting so the lady could hear him that that would tire her of taking everybody out so late at night. His uncle pulled his ears, and I went to find Raymond, who had gone to sulk at the passage window.

"You are not going to sing then, neighbor?"

"Can one do anything here, I ask you now?—such disorder!—such a mob! one doesn't know what to be at! I've told Vauvert, ten times at least, to make a program and paste it on the drawing-room mirror; if he did that everything would be done in regular order. But no, he'll listen to nothing; he thinks only of amusing himself with sly flirtations, instead of attending to the details of his concert."

"Well, really, it might be managed much better."

"To give us a concerto on the 'cello which seems as though it would never end, and rasps one's ears horribly! Besides, you may say what you like, a woman playing the 'cello always looks extremely ridiculous. It reminds me of a man darning stockings, and this baroness had much better be darning hers than performing staccatos and arpeggios."

"What are you talking about?—a baroness darning stockings!"

"Oh, leave me alone, will you? A pretty baron I take him to be. I saw him the other day on the Boulevard du Temple buying apples at a sous for the pile, and still he was beating them down. He bought a sausage a yard long for his dinner, and some one who's been to his house to dine told me that they offer people gooseberries to eat with mackerel. But this Vauvert is unique; he'll want us to believe that he receives princes, ambassadors next, perhaps, while his house is more like Noah's ark than anything else."

"By the way, you seem to be acquainted with Madame de Marsan."

"Madame de Marsan? Why yes, I go to her parties. She's a beautiful woman, coquettish, as you must have seen; but she's witty and graceful, and well-bred. Any one would take her to be a woman of twenty-eight, whereas she's thirty-two at least. She's had a good many rather steep flirtations, but as she does not advertise them, as she always maintains the utmost decorum, no one has anything to say about her; the conventions must be respected, whatever takes place. The husband's a good-enough fellow — very sharp in looking after his own interests, they say. He's a man of business, but not one of those unlucky chaps who have to run about for a fortnight to get a note discounted — on which they have to pay seven or eight francs commission — or who offer surreptitiously houses which they have seen

advertised in the 'Petites Affiches' — that's well understood; he makes a good deal of money. He has a fine country house, just beyond Saint-Denis, in which his wife has had a pretty little theatre built; I am going to play there later on. It's a very desirable acquaintance, one can get a good deal of pleasure there. As for me, I've been there twice now, and I know they hold me in the highest esteem. If you like, my dear fellow, I'll take you there; you are sure of a good reception if presented by me."

"I thank you, but you know I don't care to seek introductions."

Raymond left me to return to the piano; he had not yet lost the hope of obtaining a hearing. I had learned all that I wanted to know in regard to Madame de Marsan. I went back into the drawing-room; I had reasons for thinking that that lady had also got information of me from my neighbor, and I knew I had not lost in her estimation by being depicted by Raymond, who was one of those men who like to give themselves none but very fine acquaintances.

I am in easy circumstances, he would have made me out rich; my birth was respectable, he would have made me out a descendant from one of the oldest families in France, and so forth and so on. He might have told Madame de Marsan that I was flighty, inconstant, a gay deceiver — but such defects never do one any harm with the ladies.

Some one was playing a piece on the harp; the player did not make more than three mistakes, she only tuned her harp twice, and she only broke four strings, therefore, we had nothing to complain of. Raymond had left Madame de Marsan to look for an accompanist, threatening, if he did not find one, to play his own accompaniment; by dint of ferreting, of pressing, and praying, he drew young Martin to the piano; and he had coughed, cleared his throat, changed the position of the candles, had the windows closed, and drawn himself up to imitate the appearance of Joconde, when a confused murmur was heard; the young ladies ran up to M. Vauvert, the young men surrounded his wife. They had been promised a contra-dance, and as it was now near midnight, if it was put off any longer they would not be able to have it. The couple yielded at last to the young people's entreaties.

"They're going to dance," shouted Vauvert, after the manner of a court crier shouting, "Silence in the court!"

Immediately everything was in confusion in the drawing-room. The young men ran about inviting the ladies; they arranged the chairs so as to make room, or begged those who were not going to dance to take refuge in the corners.

Raymond had remained with his mouth open before the piano; he tried to deceive himself, he could not believe what he saw. I thought he was

going to begin his song, but instead of the tedious repetition of "Joconde" it was a "figure de Pantalon" which young Martin played. My neighbor could not brook this last affront; he seized the music with a hand trembling with anger and, with his roll under his arm, crossed the drawing-room, rushing like a madman through the midst of the dancers in spite of the kicks he received from the young men who were balancing to their partners; at that moment, I am convinced, he did not feel them at all.

"M. Raymond is going away in a bad temper," said a lady laughingly to Madame Vauvert. This lady's hair was dressed à la Ninon, but it had come out of curl and was floating on the air in long strands, although she had only taken her hair out of papers as she came up the staircase.

"Why, that makes no difference to me," answered Madame Vauvert, "he wearies us with his songs, or rather his verses, which he reads to us; it's always the same thing."

At this moment Raymond, whom I had supposed to be already far away, appeared at the drawing-room door, impatiently exclaiming,—

"My hat, Madame Vauvert, I want my hat; where is it? It's a terrible nuisance that one can never find one's things at your house."

"Mercy, your hat isn't lost! Oh, good heavens, my cat! I can't see him now, and I put him on a chair beside the fireplace. Why have they

disturbed him, my poor Moumoute, and the door on the landing has been so often opened. He's gone out, and some one will steal him from me! Moumoute! Moumoute!"

They continued to dance, without paying any attention to Madame Vauvert's bemoanings or M. Raymond's objurgations; the dancers wished to indemnify themselves by a moment's pleasure for several hours of boredom, and those who feared that their turn would not come put back the hands of the clock while M. Vauvert had his back turned and his wife was looking for her cat.

I had invited Madame de Marsan to dance, and after some little demur she consented to take her place with me.

"What a singular house," said she to me.

"I find it charming since meeting you here."

"Well, as it is highly probable that you will not meet me here again, and as I should like very much to see more of you, I hope, monsieur, you will do me the honor of coming to hear a little music at my house."

I accepted the invitation, as you may well imagine, and after the contra-dance I prowled around with her husband, with whom I entered into conversation. I spoke with him on speculations, houses, castles, business on 'Change; I was careful to mention, in an off-hand manner, my name, my family, and my fortune. In any other house I should not have gone into these matters, but

in such a mixed assembly I should have been sorry for him to confound me with people estimable enough, perhaps, but nothing more; and in the eyes of many people that is not a sufficient claim to distinction. To sum it up, I will wager that M. de Marsan found me very pleasing; it is so easy to attack people on their weak side — when they have one, be it understood.

When young ladies set themselves to dancing they are like a poet who recites his verses to an audience of his friends — they never know when to leave off. However, Madame Vauvert, who found that they made too much noise and who feared to displease the landlord, had several times said, "This must be the last." But the last never came to an end.

Friquet, who now came in, very angry at having been obliged to escort a lady, slipped behind the dancers, went to look at the clock, and then ran to tell his uncle that some one had put back the hands, which only marked twelve o'clock while it was really one. Vauvert consulted his watch; he saw that his nephew was right and felt that he must show some decision, and that it would accord with his dignity to promptly send his company home.

He immediately hastened to extinguish the lamps placed in the four corners of the drawing-room. There now remained only a few candles burning, and some of the young men were about

to extinguish them, in order to render the scene more comical, when Vauvert took possession of them and thus addressed the company,—

"I have already said that it was time to retire; my wife is indisposed, and I am surprised that you should continue to dance against our will."

The finished politeness of this speech set everybody off laughing, and they hurried into the passage to prepare for departure. But there the confusion and disorder reached its climax. The ladies were calling for their shawls, their bonnets, their scarfs, and their shoes; the singers were clamoring for their music books, the players for their instruments. They made all sorts of mistakes, and could not find their own belongings; the young men joined the ladies under pretext of helping them, but in reality because those hurried moments always afford opportunities for lovers to press their ladies' hands, to whisper soft nothings, and perhaps even to snatch a kiss. One tied a bow of ribbon, another assisted in putting on a jacket, a third supported a little foot on his knee while he tied his young lady's shoe strings. In the midst of this crowd and confusion the mammas called their daughters, the husbands their wives, and the brothers their sisters; but these ladies were too much engaged to answer them. There were whisperings, squeezing of hands, appointments made, other parties planned; the moment of departure is not the least amusing part of the evening.

Wishing to save Madame de Marsan the trouble of looking for her shawl in this crowd, I went into the bedroom, made my way to the bed, on which the shawls and cloaks and hats had been thrown, and, in seeking for a shawl, my hand encountered a figure and I stole my arm around a waist, thinking it was that of a lady with whom I was very intimate. But the lady, who was leaning over the bed and whose back only I could see, turned suddenly round, and I saw it was not the one I had supposed, and in my confusion I was beginning all sorts of apologies, but she smiled on me most graciously, to my great astonishment, for in the drawing-room she had been prudish and precise, severe even. But one can never trust to appearances; I have already said that I never put any faith in them, but one is apt to say that and to be misled by them all the same. At length each one had got what he was looking for.

Friquet, who wanted to go to bed, had for some time been standing on the landing holding a candle in his hand, ready to light us down. As to the master and mistress of the house, they had sufficiently attested their desire to see us depart; so we put ourselves in motion. It was a little procession in which each one took the hand of the one he preferred and went down the stairs, laughing at the party; the young men made a good deal of noise, because Vauvert had recommended them to be as quiet as possible on account of the

neighbors. At length, on the second landing, a young man upset the candlestick Friquet was holding, and we found ourselves in utter darkness.

They laughed more than ever, the mammas scolded the author of this jest and the other ladies did the same; but I have reasons for believing that many of them were not at all displeased with it.

"You little idiot, you never do anything like anybody else!" shouted Vauvert to his nephew, from the head of the stairs.

"It wasn't my fault, uncle; somebody knocked the candlestick out of my hand on purpose."

"I can't understandt how any one can blease himself mit making us risk falling and hurting ourselves, berhaps," muttered the Baron de Witcheritche. I think he was jealous of his wife, and the darkness made him uneasy.

"My dear, take firm hold of the banisters," said the baroness, in a flute-like voice, "and be careful of my stradivarius."

"It vas on accoundt of your stradivarius that I vas afraidt."

We went softly and cautiously down. I gave my hand to Madame de Marsan and I did not complain of the darkness; but the little clerk, who had been to relight his candle by that of the portress, returned with his light just as we had reached the foot of the staircase. I noticed then some changes in the order of our departure; there were flushed faces and eyes cast down, perhaps because

the light hurt them; but I did not doubt the discretion of these ladies, married and unmarried.

The moment for good-byes had arrived. I saw some poor young men who lived towards the Palais-Royal obliged to escort ladies, who were unaccompanied by the male members of their families, to the depths of the Marais. I saw young ladies preparing to take their sweetheart's arms, and I saw women who sighed as they took their husband's. I should have seen much beside, doubtless, had it not been so dark. But Madame de Marsan had got into the carriage with her husband: the latter, learning that I lived in the Rue Saint-Florentin, obligingly offered me a seat in his brougham, which I accepted without further ceremony. Decidedly M. de Marsan was a very amiable man.

"There's nobody else, now," shouted Friquet to the porter, as he closed the entrance gate.

"That's a very good thing!" answered the latter, shutting his pane. "Past one o'clock. I can assure you that they'll give your uncle notice. Really, he makes a great deal of trouble, giving parties and keeping everybody awake — and all for nothing. When people want to do such things they ought to have a house to themselves."

CHAPTER IX

The Bouquet. A Junket. The Rose Without Thorns

We chatted merrily as we rolled along in the carriage, of the musical evening we had just passed at M. Vauvert's. Madame de Marsan laughed heartily as we recalled the humorous situations and the comical faces and figures we had met there, and discussed the pretentious conceit and the mediocre talent of the performances we had been compelled to listen to.

M. de Marsan, who appeared more bored than amused, shrugged his shoulders and gave vent to a few cursory opinions to the effect that the mania for making a display was on the increase in every class of society — that people were forgetting the customs of their forefathers and no longer thought of amusing themselves in the bosoms of their families; that everybody's chief aspiration in the present day was to leave the sphere in which fate had placed him; that men became more and more eager in their pursuit of pleasure; that in order to satisfy this imperious need the mechanic sacrificed his week's earnings, the workman the fruits of his economy, the clerk three-fourths of his salary,

from whence came embarrassments, borrowing, debts and bankruptcy,— the obvious inference being that it was necessary to calculate one's income before giving dinners, parties and balls.

"It seems to me," said Madame de Marsan, "that the parties given by M. Vauvert are not likely to ruin him."

"It may appear so to you, madame, because you noticed only the general effect of the thing, which I must concede afforded nothing very brilliant to the sight; but for an inferior clerk, these lamps, these wax candles on the music stands, the piano which he hires, this music, the instruments which he has to have brought, and, finally, the modest refreshments — the cost of all these things is as great for a clerk with a stipend of eighteen hundred francs as is the brilliant fête, where everything is offered in profusion, to the rich banker. The only difference between the banker and the clerk is that everybody praises the fête of the former and makes a boast of having been to it; while everybody makes fun of the latter's party, where people go only to quiz their entertainers, who put themselves to great inconvenience merely to cause others to laugh at their expense.

M. de Marsan was right; here was a husband who spoke very wisely. I approved of all he said; first of all, because I thought as he did upon this subject, and further, because I had my reasons for always agreeing with him.

M. de Marsan lived at the entrance to the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, I could not restrain my desire to laugh when I learned his address, because I recalled the confounded cabman who, on the evening when I had wished to follow the De Marsan's carriage, had driven me to the top of the Faubourg Montmartre; but I very quickly accounted for my merriment by saying it was due to the concert, and as that had been equally comical to all of us they thought it very natural. They put me down in the Rue Saint-Florentin, after inviting me to come and hear, not a concert, but a little music, which is very different; I must confess I had not heard any music at M. Vauvert's amateur concert.

Here, in front of my own door, I thought of my new acquaintance, I dared not say my conquest, though in secret I flattered myself she was so. However, I had not forgotten the seductive Caroline, who had made an appointment with me for the next day. My imagination had material for dreams; what sources of pleasure the future promised me. I could see nothing harder than rose leaves there, and my charmed spirit sought to deceive my heart, which in all this endeavored to find that something which it craved.

I went upstairs in the dark; for it was very late, and Madame Dupont extinguished her reflector at midnight. As I went to put my key in the lock my hand encountered something — leaves, flowers; it was a bouquet which someone had

placed there for me. Oh, I knew very well who had done it. I went into my rooms, where I soon procured a light by means of my phosphoric flint, and then I examined my bouquet. It was charming — orange blossoms, roses, violets, surrounded with pansies, and the whole tied with a little white ribbon. Sweet Nicette, you still think, then, of me? — you are not ungrateful? Oh, no, your heart is as good as you are virtuous. What a pity that, possessing these two precious qualities, you should have been born of such obscure parentage; not that I believe those of your own rank incapable of appreciating your virtues, while I may only admire them. You will be a treasure to someone; to me you can be nothing. For I must seek my treasure in the upper classes; there are some there, without doubt, but they are not all so enticing as you.

How had she managed to place the bouquet at my keyhole? If it had not been so late I would have gone down to question my portress; but I was obliged to wait till the morrow. Raymond, who saw everything, would have seen the bouquet; perhaps? — he was so much wrapped up in the song of "Joconde."

I wished it was the morrow, that I might interrogate Madame Dupont. I could not refrain from smelling and admiring Nicette's bouquet; I looked at all the pansies. Oh, I understood; gratitude was expressed in it. Poor little thing! she loved

her benefactor — that was very natural; but, pretty as she is, lovers will soon besiege her, her heart will awaken, and she will forget me. It is always thus that such things end. I put her bouquet carefully into water, and I went to bed.

Here I passed in review all the events of the day. Madame de Marsan and Caroline took leading parts; both these women were coquettes; in a different sense, it is true, but still it was coquetry. Alas, all the women I had known had possessed it; to sum it all up, I did not believe that I had ever been really loved, or at least, if I had, the love had been very fleeting. And what is that feeling which is but a short-lived caprice and which is incapable of resisting the slightest trial. Yet my sister had wished me to marry. But why should I hope to find in a wife that which I had not found in a mistress. No doubt a tie which the law has now made indissoluble, children, duties, regard for the opinion of the world, might prevent a wife from being unfaithful to me; but all these considerations could not resuscitate her love when once it had been extinguished.

No, I would not marry; I would enjoy life. But, though I did not know why, for some time past I had been conscious that I was not entirely happy. Although flighty, I am sensitive, my heart seeks sympathy; it is not my fault I do not find a heart that responds to my own. For some time past I had met only treacherous, unfaithful

women; formerly I used to leave them first, but lately they have not given me time to do this. It is true that I have been foolish in allowing them the opportunity of doing so; I would be wiser in the future, take women for what they were, and thank my luck when it turned out well for me.

Who knows? Catherine may perhaps love me? Madame de Marsan may perhaps be less coquettish than I think her; the little flower-girl perhaps not so coldly chaste; and as to Madame de Marsan's adventures as related by Raymond, my neighbor has such an evil tongue that one can put no faith in anything he says. I lulled myself to sleep with the images of my fair friends, but, why I know not, the remembrance of Nicette was always mingled in my plans and my hopes.

I think it must have been the odor of the orange blossoms which recalled her thus to my thoughts; but the flowers smelled so good that I did not wish to put them out of my room. What a kindly attention to have bought me this bouquet, and to have placed it in such a manner that I could not go into my room without finding it in my hand. Ah, if women are coquettish and deceitful, they alone are capable of those little kindnesses, those refined attentions, that delicacy of feeling which causes them to find in the slightest circumstance the means of giving tokens of their love or friendship. I went to sleep; but why was it that I did not dream of Caroline or of Madame de Marsan?

It was of Nicette that I dreamed, it was she alone who filled my sleeping thoughts. Oh, no doubt the odor of the orange flowers recalled her even in my slumber.

I was still sleeping when Madame Dupont came in to attend to my household matters. I hastened to question her, for I wished to know if she had seen Nicette.

"Madame Dupont, did anyone ask for me yesterday evening?"

"No, monsieur, nobody."

"You did not see anybody come up to my rooms?"

"You may well believe I didn't, monsieur, for I shouldn't have let them go up, knowing that you were out."

That was singular! How had she managed to evade the portress' notice? She evidently had not wished anyone to see her bringing me the bouquet, she had thought that that would make me angry; I felt the value of the present was enhanced. To distract myself from all these thoughts I turned my mind to the commissions with which my brother-in-law had charged me. I went out, leaving Madame Dupont arranging in a box all the artificial flowers which were still scattered about my rooms; but I ordered her not to touch the bouquet which was on my mantelpiece.

This order would be to my portress the source of much conjecture.

My day was filled by the errands and applications I was obliged to make at the offices of different ministers from whom Déneterre, who was about to build and wished to complete different enterprises, needed information and support. I was not at all averse to having a little occupation, it made the time pass more quickly. Do not think, however, that I ordinarily passed my days in culpable idleness; no, I cherished the fine arts, particularly poetry and music, and gave myself up to them with ardor when my amorous follies allowed me leisure; but I must confess that for some time past I had terribly neglected them.

It was time to think about dinner, for I did not forget that I had for that evening an appointment on the Boulevard de Bondy, around the Château-d'Eau. In order that I might be near to the neighborhood indicated I thought that in place of dining, according to my custom, at the Palais-Royal I should not do ill to dine on the boulevard of the smaller theatres; I should thus be at hand for the evening. I would direct my steps, then, towards the Marais.

Arrived at the Boulevard du Temple, I had no further trouble than an embarrassment of choice. I knew all the restaurants, I was not junketing; it was necessary, therefore, only to think which one was the more convenient, without troubling about which had the best private rooms. I decided on going to the Cadran-Bleu; their prices

are high, but ordinarily one dines fairly well there. To the Cadran-Bleu, then, I pursued my way, and I was passing the Jardin Turc when I perceived in front of me a gentleman with a lady on his arm. Raymond's figure was too easily recognizable for me to be mistaken; it was he — that was his walk, his big calves, his gestures — it was indeed he. As to the lady, her face was hidden under a big bonnet, but it seemed to me that I knew her also. My neighbor was conversing very animatedly, and I saw that he was squeezing her arm; he had every appearance of being in luck. I was confoundedly curious to learn where they were going. I wanted to see, unperceived by Raymond, the face of his sweetheart, whose figure seemed familiar to me. But they crossed the boulevard and went into a restaurant which was situated at the corner of the Rue d'Angoulême. It was the Meridien; I thought I remembered that one was served there by women, and that the accommodation was very good; at least, it had been so in former years. What was to prevent my following my neighbor there; by good luck I might chance to see his fair friend, and Raymond made so much fuss about his mistresses, to hear him one would believe they were all princesses or rarely beautiful, and I should not be sorry to see one of those marvellous beings.

I left the Cadran-Bleu on my right, and though I did not expect to dine so well, I went into

the Meridien and asked for a private room. A young woman led me to it, and we passed by a room from whence I heard Raymond's voice. I made her open the door of the next room. The partition which separated me from Raymond and his charmer was thin enough for me to hear their voices when they did not speak low; besides, I left my door open, and theirs was not yet shut because the table was being laid. I could therefore catch from time to time something of what my neighbor was saying, for he had an unlucky trick of speaking very loudly — a habit he had contracted in trying to attract attention to himself, and which he preserved in his incognito. According to what I could hear, Raymond was giving himself a good deal of trouble to please his lady, whose taste he consulted in the choice of the dinner. He was, it seemed, reading his carte for the first time; she was at a loss to decide upon anything, she did not like anything, she was not hungry, everything was the same to her, but she asked for a thousand things that were not on the carte. I judged easily from all these affectations and from the manners of this young lady that my neighbor had not made a very distinguished conquest; I should even have said that his fair friend was making game of him, and that she was amusing herself by trying to arouse his anger. I was willing to wager that vexation was all he would get in return for his dinner.

Every time I heard the lady's voice it awakened confused memories, I was certain that I knew that woman; however, I could not say who it was, I had known so many that it was hardly to be expected that I should not confound them in my memory, and then I could only catch scraps of the conversation. No matter, I should like to see her, and see her I would.

It seemed to me that Raymond had decided to order the dinner, and I did not hear them say any more. The lady hummed some fragments from a vaudeville — surely that voice was very familiar to me. I heard him ring the bell; the servant came up. Raymond gave her the carte and ordered his dinner; the young girl went down. The lady wished for a whipped cream which my neighbor had not ordered; he ran after the young girl to have her add it to the carte, and in passing my room, of which I had been careful to have the door open, he glanced in and saw me.

"Why, whom do I see? My friend Dorsan?"

"Myself, M. Raymond, and what are you doing here?"

He entered with a mysterious air, walking on his tiptoes, indicated to me the private room beside mine, and, trying to whisper, said, —

"I am there, in the room beside this."

"You don't mean it!"

"With someone — "

"Ah, I understand, you have a junket on hand."

"Exactly so."

"Oh, you are a terrible man. They may accuse me of being flighty, a gay deceiver; but I am sure you are a hundred times worse than I am."

"It is true that I know how to go the pace myself."

"And the person who is with you?"

"Oh, she's a charmer, a delightful woman, of immense style; she has a carriage, quite an equipage, with livery and so forth. We are here incognito."

"I can well believe it."

"In coming here with me today she has accorded me a favor denied to a thousand others."

"How fortunate you are! You pique my curiosity. May I not see her?"

"Oh, that's impossible, my dear fellow, impossible! She's a woman who is extremely careful of her reputation. If she knew I had been indiscreet enough to mention her to one of my friends she would be willing to put me to death, and she would never forgive me."

"Well, I won't insist on it, since I see it puts you out. Nevertheless, I compliment you on having made such a fine conquest."

"It is true that she holds herself in no small esteem; but, you know, in regard to women, I am rather hard to please, I don't go with the first comer. I insist on good form and stylish appearance."

I thought that the last was a sarcastic thrust at me on the part of M. Raymond.

"I like, above all, to succeed in making an impression on a woman who is cold and difficult to please; there is some merit in that — determination is necessary — you understand what I mean. But I wager my fair friend is getting impatient; good-by, neighbor; love and a voluptuous repast call me."

"Pray don't allow them to wait."

Raymond departed, puffed up with delight at being seen under such circumstances, and went back into his room, of which he closed the door. What he had said had increased my curiosity, for I felt sure he had been romancing to me as usual. I gave no credence to his stories of fine ladies; and while he was talking to me I could see him seeking for lies to tell me. It seemed to me that he put in more details than usual, in order to make me believe him. You are not yet clever enough to catch me napping, my dear Raymond, said I to myself; it's because you saw me with a little flower-girl that you boast to me and launch epigrams at me; but I have an idea that your fine lady is not worth as much as my little Nicette.

My window looked on to the boulevard and, while waiting for my soup, I opened my casement to enjoy the view; I was not junketing, and therefore I did not object to a little more daylight. I noticed that my neighbor's shade was not down

and concluded therefrom that Raymond's affair was not very far advanced.

As I was watching the passers-by I saw a young man who was not unknown to me stop on the boulevard before our restaurant. It was that Gerville who lived in my house; with whom Agathe had been on that memorable night when I had given hospitality to Nicette. But what was he doing there? He had stopped and was looking from one side to the other; he appeared to be waiting or looking for some one.

Somebody was opening my neighbor's window. Good! Perhaps the lady wished to get a little air and I should be able to see her face. Why, what was the matter with them? I heard an exclamation and the window was suddenly shut. Something extraordinary was evidently taking place in there. I thought indeed that I should become nearly as curious as Raymond.

I drew back from the window; it seemed to me that they were arguing warmly in the next room. By Jove! let them do as they would, I should dine first of all, for I was hungry. Just then the damsel brought in my soup. But what a noise! Raymond darted suddenly into my room, pale, discomposed, trembling, and in his precipitate haste pushed the servant and caused her to upset the soup in front of the table.

"Oh, good heavens, monsieur, how disagreeable," said the girl, picking up her tureen. "You

made me scald myself in a pretty fashion, all this soup on my foot; I'm sure I shall be famously blistered!"

"That's all right, my girl, I'll pay for your soup."

"And my apron is ruined — and my leg?"

"I'll pay you for everything," answered Raymond, who did not know what he was saying. He pushed the girl outside and carefully closed the door.

"Well, what the devil is the matter with you, M. Raymond? You seem to be wild with fright."

"Oh, my dear fellow, I've good cause to be so — a circumstance has arisen which — oh, my position is terrifying. Wait till I go and look out of the window; oh, will you first do me the favor of drawing up the curtain that no one may see me?"

"Have you lost your wits, neighbor?"

Raymond did not answer, he looked out of the window cautiously, carefully screening himself behind the curtain as he did so; I noticed that he became still paler.

"He's there," he said to me at length.

"Who is there?"

"Gerville."

"Ah, so he is! but what has that to do with you?"

"It has a good deal to do with me. Are you not aware that he's horribly jealous, and capable of carrying himself to the greatest excesses?"

"And what of that?"

"Well, you must know that it's me he's after. I'm certain he's watching me, and not without cause, for I am with his mistress."

"What! does it happen to be Agathe whom you have transformed into a lady with an equipage and liveries?"

"What of that, my dear fellow — that was the better to disguise her — to preserve her reputation."

"Oh, as to the latter I tell you she has nothing to lose. Ha, ha, ha! M. Raymond; so cold, unyielding women are necessary to you — women of a certain style!"

"You can joke later on, my dear fellow, but now save me, I beg of you; I can hope to get out of this frightful situation only by your help.

"Come, explain yourself."

"Gerville is, I am certain, going to enter this house. Some one must have told him that I was here. You watch for a moment — take my place and let me take yours in this room — I will leave my door open, he'll see me alone, and that will dispel his suspicions."

"But why can't you shut yourself in with your fair friend? He won't break in your door."

"He would be capable of doing so — or of waiting for me on the boulevard; and if I go out with Agathe you can imagine that there'll be a scandalous scene. And then, lodging in the same

house as we do, how do you suppose, if he discovers anything, that I can go tranquilly to my rooms. He's just the man who would wait for me on the staircase at night."

"Why the devil, then, did you interfere with his mistress?"

"How can you ask it? It was a momentary folly that took me when I was standing on our landing with her."

"Oh, yes, the morning that you were both spying upon me."

"Good God, he's come in!" exclaimed Raymond, who had gone to look out on the boulevard. "My dear fellow, do see me through this —I entreat you go — I will rejoin you."

Without giving me time to answer him, Raymond put my hat on my head, drew me out of my room, and shut himself up in it. I had allowed myself to be led and without quite knowing what I wanted or intended to do for my neighbor, whose bravery was not his strong point, I went into the room where Agathe was; she uttered an exclamation of surprise when she saw me.

"Oh, good heavens! it's Eugene! What! is this you?"

"Why, of course it's me; I'm sacrificing myself to the duty of saving that poor fellow Raymond, who's sick with fear."

"Ha, ha, ha! I shall never get over it!"

"Hush! He's in there, he can hear you laugh-

ing, and it seems to me that at this particular moment he'll take it very ill on your part."

"Do you really think so; well, it's all the same to me; ha, ha, ha! And do you happen to imagine that I'm in love with Raymond? Oh, he is really altogether too stupid — and he wants to play the Lovelace. Oh, I can't stand any more of him. When I opened the window and saw Gerville on the boulevard, I called out in surprise and quickly drew in my head; I did not want Gerville to see me with Raymond. Not that he is jealous, but it would have displeased him. And do you know what I did? It flashed into my head to say to my idiot that Gerville was horribly jealous, and that he had been very suspicious regarding Raymond ever since he had known that we had remained tête-a-tête on the landing for two hours, and that I was, in fact, certain that he was on the boulevard only to spy on us. The more I said the more frightened I saw my adorer become, for his love for himself is very much in excess of his love for me; when I added that Gerville was quite capable of taking a knife and stabbing him, ha, ha, ha! the poor man took his hat — and ran for his life. Ha, ha, ha! but it is very kind of him to have sent me such pleasant company. However, I should very much like to know what has become of Gerville; I believe he's merely waiting for one of his friends."

"Hush! some one is coming up the stairs —

Raymond is opening his door; listen! Gerville is speaking."

We glued ourselves against our door, that we had very gently half-opened, and we heard the following dialogue,—

"Why, it's neighbor Raymond."

"It is that very same individual, very much at your service. How's your health?"

"Oh, not bad. What! are you dining alone in a private room?"

"Yes, I am very much taken up with some business, and I wanted to be undisturbed."

"That being the case, I will leave you. I am expecting a little girl who made an appointment with me on this boulevard; but it is getting late and I must go and get some dinner. Good-day, neighbor; I wish you a good appetite."

"Your servant, sir."

Gerville shut the door of Raymond's room and went into another, passing by ours.

"Come, mademoiselle," said I to Agathe, "decide to which of these gentlemen you wish to give the preference."

"Oh, a charming idea has occurred to me."

"Some other folly, I suppose, for you dream of nothing but that."

"Oh, this will be unique; second me, my dear Eugene, I beg of you."

And without saying anything further to me Agathe began to stride about the room, she pushed

the chairs about and threw some of them to the ground, and while making all this rumpus from time to time exclaimed,—

"My dear, don't be angry, I assure you you are mistaken; I tell you that I have not seen Raymond, that I don't like him. Ask Dorsan if it is not so — he has offered to dine with me because he's waiting for a lady."

I began to divine Agathe's plan; she wanted to make Raymond believe that Gerville was with us; and in order to second her I made noise enough for two, and at times imitated Gerville's voice. Tired of our comedy at length, we stopped. Agathe made me a sign which I understood. I left the room, the door of which she carefully closed, and softly entered that of Raymond, whom I found trembling and half dead with fright before a beefsteak and potatoes. I shut the door before going up to him, and placed my finger on my lips; we looked like two conspirators. Raymond spoke so low that I could scarcely hear him.

"He is there," I said to him, pointing to the other room.

"I know it only too well, I heard him. But how did he get in?"

"We thought he had gone down, and opened our door; but he was still on the watch, he had caught sight of Agathe, and he came in. There was a terrible scene because he suspected she had come with you; for he is not jealous of me."

"Confound it! I know only too well that he's deucedly jealous of me. I saw very well just now that he didn't believe what I said to him. He had some suspicion; perhaps he saw us passing along the boulevard."

"That's quite possible, and you were most imprudent, in fact. When one has an affair like this on hand, one takes a cab and uses the back entrance of the restaurant."

"That is true, you are right. We should have gone in by the back way; but I can safely assure you that I shall go out by that one."

"He thought, first of all, that I was your confidant — that I was only there to serve you. In fact, I rather put myself in a bad place on your account."

"My dear Dorsan, all my life I shall remember what I owe to you."

"Well, he is now a little calmer than he was; in fact, Agathe has made him hear reason. She told him that she had only come here to watch him; that she now was the one to be jealous."

"Ha! ha! that's delightful! that's charming; these women always manage to get out of everything."

"I wanted to leave them to dine alone, but they wouldn't hear of it. I came out under the pretext of ordering dinner."

"It is ordered, my dear fellow, and I shall take care to pay for it. I don't wish to put you to

any expense when you are sacrificing yourself for me!"

"As you wish. I'm going to say a word to the waitress, then we'll sit down to dinner."

"Come, my generous friend — prevent him from speaking of me."

"Be easy about that."

"Oh, I have but one fear."

"And what is that?"

"Just now, wishing to surprise Agathe, when her back was turned I amused myself by slipping my portrait into her reticule."

"Your portrait?"

"Yes, that is to say, one of my silhouettes — you know what I mean very well — which I had pasted on a rose-colored foundation bordered with little cupids. If in taking out her handkerchief Agathe should let it fall, or not knowing what it is should want to look at it — "

"Confound it! that would bring about a fine row; Gerville would be sure to say that I was conspiring with you to deceive him."

"Try, my dear fellow, try to prevent Agathe from blowing her nose."

"I can't promise to do that, but I will sign to her to use her napkin instead of her handkerchief; that will not compromise you."

"That will be just as well."

"Good-by, a longer absence would give rise to suspicion."

I left Raymond, who on this occasion, shut himself in his room. I returned to Agathe and the girl appeared with the dinner; she seemed greatly surprised at the change in the gallant, but two words and a hundred sous piece slipped into her hand bought her over to our interests. She promised to say to the fat gentleman that there were three of us, and she went off, delighted at being able to amuse herself at the expense of the man who had made her upset the hot soup over her feet.

"And now let us have our dinner," said I, placing myself at the table with Agathe; "it must be confessed that we have well earned it; I hardly expected to dine with you, I vow."

"Nor I with you; but unexpected pleasures are always the greatest."

"Certainly, more than a month ago we had already become reasonable in our tête-à-têtes."

"Yes, we did well to part; for it gives us so much pleasure to find ourselves together again."

"Oh, I am aware that you are passionately fond of variety."

"No, my dear, it is not so much variety I crave, as forbidden fruit, and when I think that Gerville is at our left and Raymond at our right, and that I have managed to avoid eating with him the dinner he has ordered — ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't laugh so loud — or he'll suspect something."

"On the contrary, that will reassure him; he'll think Gerville is in a good humor. Ha, ha, ha! That'll give him a fine appetite."

Agathe was foolishly gay, she was obliged to hold her napkin to her mouth to stifle her peals of laughter; the delight of deceiving two men at once gave her face a new expression, and I confess I had never seen her look so pretty. Ah, Mademoiselle Agathe, you are very perfidious, but also very enticing. For some days, besides, my flirtations had consisted only of oglings and sighings, and I felt that I ought to make the most of the occasion and so render Raymond's hoaxing more complete. Oh, my poor neighbor, had you but known with what delight Agathe hoaxed you! But we heard some one come up; it was our waitress, who, after giving due notice of her approach, brought in the first course. I tasted the wine, it was Volnay of the first quality; by Jove! my neighbor is fastidious in his tastes.

"You will have a fine dinner," said the waitress, laughing; "that gentleman forgot nothing. Champagne, dessert, and also a Roman punch."

"So we shall have some Roman punch, shall we?" said Agathe, "we must not forget that, my dear, do you hear?"

"Be sure I shan't. But, my girl, has our neighbor asked any question about us?"

"Yes, and I told him that madame was dining with two gentlemen; he seemed more composed."

"Very good, indeed!"

We feasted meanwhile on Raymond's dinner, which was very choice and delicate. In the pauses of the meal I begged Agathe to inform me how it happened that she had chanced to be dining in this manner with my neighbor, whom she did not like.

"It was in order that I might have more sport with him," she said. "Since the day we were together on your landing to watch for your little flower-girl Raymond has thought fit to pay court to me; he literally pursues me with his proposals and his billets-doux, which I receive that I may show them to the young ladies at the shop; they make us laugh a good deal, for he is as comical in his style of writing as in his person. He had already begged me twenty times to make an appointment with him, when to-day I met him at the Porte Saint-Denis; I was just returning to my rooms, for I had been to Gerville's and found him out. Raymond begged and entreated me to dine with him at a restaurant. At first I refused him, but the desire to make fun of him, to laugh at his expense — to amuse myself, in fact — made me change my resolution. You know, besides, how heedless I am. I did not exactly expect to meet Gerville, which I confess I should not care to do, so I accepted the invitation and allowed myself to be led to a private room by this poor Raymond, who was beaming with victory, though I assure you he would have had his pains for his trouble."

"Let's drink to his health."

"Willingly."

"Is this the Roman punch?"

"In a moment — how you go on! We are not come to that yet."

"This vol-au-vent is delicious — and also this fillet-saute au Madère with truffles."

"And this salmi of partridges with more truffles. Oh, that poor Raymond, just see his slyness, he's had truffles put in everything."

The waitress arrived with the rum and the second course.

"Good heavens," said Agathe, "truffles cooked with champagne; why, it's enough to kill one. And what is our neighbor eating?"

"Some fowl with rice, madame."

"Very good, it's nourishing; you will also give him some prunes for dessert — they are emollient."

The waitress left us. We feasted on truffles, chicken, crawfish, of which Agathe wanted to send Raymond the shells. We did not forget the Roman punch, of which my companion was very fond, as I was myself. With this dinner of his lost hopes the seductive Raymond had put the very mischief into us; it seemed to me that he was very fond of truffles in his junketings. But in making me take his place with Agathe, he had charged me with a terrible duty.

"Revenge yourself," said she to me at every moment, "revenge yourself, Eugene; you know

that Raymond was the cause of your little vestal's being seen the other morning; and you know he made a good deal of talk about you when I used to go and see you; you know that because of his curiosity and indiscretion he has embroiled you with several ladies — revenge yourself, I repeat."

How terrible are these women when it is a question of vengeance! Agathe left me no respite; my appetite would not support so severe a strain, and as dish after dish was partaken of my rancor exhausted itself. Happily they brought the dessert; but, alas, champagne appeared now, vanilla cream, macaroons, liqueur des îles, liqueur de Madame Amphoux. I felt I was lost; this vengeance was double-edged, and in taking my revenge on the terrible Raymond I should meet my death.

"I should like to know how he takes it now," said Agathe, "go and talk to him a bit."

I left our room, the door of which she held half open to listen; I coughed slightly, and Raymond opened the door.

"Well, how are you getting along?" said he.

"Oh, very well, very well indeed; we are at the dessert now."

"And Gerville?"

"Oh, he's forgotten all about it."

"I was afraid he would have made a scene with Agathe. It seemed to me I heard him groan or sigh."

"That was caused by regret, by love — and then he still pretends to be jealous — but at bottom I can see very well that she's thinking of you only."

"Oh, she adores me, my dear fellow! I have no doubt at all as to that!"

"Your dinner is delicious; you do things well, M. Raymond."

"Oh, yes, I ordered it carefully. I thought I should share it with her."

"She knows that you ordered it; she feels under the same obligation to you as if you had partaken of it with her. I could read in her eyes that she did not eat a truffle without thinking of you."

"Dear Agathe! But I hear laughter — it seems to me —"

"Yes, it is hers, she is forcing herself to laugh the better to deceive Gerville; but I must go, the whipped cream is awaiting me. Good-by, my dear fellow."

"What! have you not yet drunk the champagne?"

"Not yet."

"You look rather heated."

"The effects of the Roman punch."

"Tell me, should I go before or after you?"

"Why, it would be wiser for you to go first."

"I shall go and walk in the Café Turc garden, in front of the pavilion with the crescent."

"I can see that from here."

"If by chance Gerville leaves you, or if he takes Agathe away, you will find me there."

"That's understood."

"In that case, I shall wait for you there. Au revoir, my dear neighbor. I ask your full pardon for all the harm I have done you. What you have done for me today is a proof of true friendship. I have but one more request to make to you, look out for my silhouette, and make a sign to Agathe not to touch her bag; do that for me, my friend."

"It is already done."

"That's all right; but do it again for my further security."

I returned to Agathe, who laughed until she cried. I had not yet thought of speaking of the silhouette; that was the bouquet for the dessert. The profile of neighbor Raymond was pasted on a pink paper with vignettes, and we could see something written beneath it, some verses by Raymond; no doubt they must be very comical,—

These loves, that round about my profile play,
Are types of that which I suspire for you each day.

It was ingenious, it was worthy of Bertheilemot; only, as we noticed that one of the little loves was on the end of his nose, we thought he should have put "I smell," in place of "I suspire." Agathe wanted at first to paste my neighbor on the mirror of our room, but she changed her mind and

put the silhouette carefully away in her bag, declaring she would have some copies of it made which she would affix to some amorous circulars composed of Raymond's letters to her, and these she would send to all the damsels she knew in the different milliners' shops, taking care to put the real address of the original at the bottom of them all.

The champagne achieved what the dinner had begun; we were in the mood to laugh and to perpetrate a thousand follies. Agathe stuffed herself with macaroons and jelly. I made the corks fly; the wine foamed and sparkled, and soon passed from our glasses to our lips; we did not know what we were saying, but we were very well aware of what we were doing. Agathe no longer restrained herself, and if Raymond should listen — why, this time he would think we really were fighting.

But the champagne, after foaming when it was poured out, foamed only when it was well shaken, and ended by not foaming at all. Thus, readers, are those volcanoes extinguished which have burned with the most vivid light. Thus, fair readers, are quenched those charming fires which dart from your beautiful eyes, and with which you make so many conquests. Everything passes, alas; in the natural order of things, everything is faded, destroyed, withered, everything dies. It is the universal law, we are born only for that;

and each step in life is towards the tomb; there is no way of evading the inevitable,—

> There is no rigor like to that of Death,
> His ears are deaf to prayer;
> This cruel Reaper who with icy breath
> Passes and leaves despair.
> He smites the poor man in his humble room,
> And guards at palace doors
> Are no defence to kings against his doom,—
> Both subject to his laws.

I do not know how the champagne led me to this quotation, but, as for that, I am certain that you will not take unkindly to my having made it. These verses are out of place nowhere; I only wish I had composed them myself. We had, then, become wise — in action, at least. I looked at my watch, almost eight o'clock — confound it! what of my rendezvous? The champagne had not stolen my memory, but I confess that Agathe had made me lose a great part of my ardor.

Raymond must for a long time have been waiting at the Café Turc. As to Gerville, we had seen him go more than an hour ago; nothing, therefore, prevented our leaving. My companion put on her bonnet and shawl and tried to assume a modest demeanor, in which she entirely failed even though she lowered her eyes; as for me I did what I could to carry myself soberly and, above all, to walk steadily; that devilish champagne always goes to my head! However, we

could venture to show ourselves on the boulevard; we were merely a trifle dizzy.

We left the Meridien. Raymond had paid for everything; the landlady and the waitress bowed to us, smiling broadly as they did so.

"Is there something comical in our appearance?" said I to Agathe.

"No; why?—did you suppose these people would not divine that we were making game of Raymond? Perhaps they think he is my husband."

"Oh, that would be a little too much."

"Pshaw! that's as one looks at it."

"Here we are at the Café Turc; shall we go in?"

"What should we do there?"

"Why, relieve Raymond, who's playing sentinel."

"Let him stay there. I have no desire to be bothered again with his love-making; I've had quite enough of it. All has turned out as I wanted it; but as such an adventure is not likely to happen twice, hereafter, I assure you, he shall not take me to dine in a private room."

"Poor Raymond; that was a junket which didn't afford him much enjoyment. But I see the Château-d'Eau; some one is waiting for me there, I must leave you."

"What! already?"

"Our play is played out, my dear, we can no

longer be of any service to each other; do not let us defer our parting until weariness succeeds pleasure and the fumes of the champagne are entirely dissipated; at least, let us guard this encounter from any disagreeable remembrance."

"Good-by, then, my dear Eugene, and may we the next time we are together amuse ourselves as much as we have done to-day."

Agathe departed, and I went to make the tour of the Château-d'Eau.

I had already walked six times around the basin. I paused from time to time in front of some lions, which I looked at from all sides; then, to vary the monotony, I listened to the water precipitating itself into the passage whence it rejoins the canals; this no doubt was very pleasant recreation, but I had begun to get tired of it. The sentinel regarded me attentively; no doubt he began to think me a suspicious character.

It grew dark; I was about to depart when I saw a woman in a little cap coming towards me — was it she at last? I dared not flatter myself even then, I had been so often mistaken, for I am rather short-sighted; but the person was coming in my direction. This time it was really she! Caroline came towards me smiling, she was arrayed in her best, but there was something refined in her dress, her cap was carefully tied, and I would wager her hair had been in curl-papers all day; she would not take so much trouble for a

man she did not wish to listen to. This young girl seemed to me passably tricky. But although champagne had rendered me more heedless than usual I did not care to escort a grisette in a cap in the centre of Paris.

"I was commencing to be afraid I should not see you," said I to her.

"Why should you do that? it is only a quarter past eight; I could not leave the shop any sooner."

"Come and walk about a bit — let's take a turn in the fields."

"In the fields! oh, no, it is too late for that — I must not go in later than nine, or my aunt will scold me."

"What a very tiresome aunt! Let's go in somewhere, then."

"No, I won't do that — what if I were seen with you."

I could not tell her that I did not care to show myself on the boulevard with her, for, in fact, I did not dare to do anything so unconventional. She wore an apron and a cap, and that would be very embarrassing to me. Certainly, in my eyes, there was no difference between a milliner and a flower-maker, but Agathe was dressed like a lady, and I could therefore give her my arm; a bonnet and shawl changes a woman's appearance considerably, and this is one of the foolish trifles to which a young man who goes into good society is obliged to submit even while he despises them. Most

assuredly had Nicette met me at mid-day, instead of midnight, I should not have conducted her to Madame Jerome's on foot.

"Let us walk about a bit in the Rue des Marais," said Caroline to me; "for there I shall not fear being seen."

"Most willingly."

This proposition was very acceptable to me; we descended the stairway, passed through the Vauxhall passage, and there we were in the Rue des Marais, a very favorable street for sentimental promenades. Mademoiselle Caroline knew the good neighborhoods!

The subject of our conversation may easily be divined; between two lovers, between a gallant and a coquette, between a pretty woman and a handsome bachelor, a young man and a grisette, the subject matter is incessantly the same — they speak of love, and of love again. For many centuries that has been the foundation of conversation between man and woman, and though an innumerable quantity of things have been said in regard to it, the subject is still inexhaustible; it cannot be denied that each one treats it in his own manner, but, after all, do they not all arrive at the same end?

The fumes of champagne made me treat my subject very flippantly, but Mademoiselle Caroline, who no doubt had not dined as well as myself, maintained greater reserve, and I could get

nothing from her; she always thrust her aunt into the breach, complaining of the severity with which the latter treated her, but, not having the means of supporting herself, she was obliged to submit to necessity.

I thought I could half see what this young girl desired, who loved her liberty and spoke enviously of bonnets and gowns, and appeared as much tired of her aunt as she was of the shop. I allowed her to perceive the means of being free and happy. I hinted at a small, well-furnished room where she would be her own mistress, where she could work at her ease, or do nothing, according to her will. All that, no doubt, sounded very pleasing to her, for mademoiselle listened to me very attentively, she did not answer, but she sighed and lowered her eyes. I talked of dress, the play, pleasure parties; she looked at me and sighed, and allowed me to take a very loving kiss. I had found her vulnerable point; the young girl was dull, bored, she wanted to be her own mistress; she wished, in fact, that some one should establish her in her own little domicile. All these pretty grisettes are the same; that is what they aspire to, as if once settled in their own dwelling their fortune was made. I saw that the flower-maker's desire lay in this, and that until it was fulfilled she would accord me nothing. This was not indicative of love, but rather denoted foresight and calculation. What should I do about it? Well, I

would be foolish once more — Caroline was charming — gratitude, perhaps, would attach her to me. Gratitude, say you — for what? — because you wish to mislead her? Yes, I confess that that is not the proper word; but you will notice that I left her free to make her own reflections.

"Caroline, does your aunt rely upon you for support?"

"No, monsieur, and I am very sure, on the contrary, that she will not be displeased to see me established."

"I understand. You have no other relatives?"

"No, monsieur."

"You will leave her without regret?"

"Oh, certainly, for we often quarrel; and if I could have settled myself in a room of my own I should have done so long ago."

"In that case after tomorrow you will be in a room of your own."

"Can it be possible? What, do you really mean it, monsieur?"

She jumped with joy, then she restrained herself; because she thought it unnecessary to allow me to see all the delight she experienced, and because propriety demanded that she should still make some demur.

"Why, monsieur, I don't know whether I really ought to accept?"

"What prevents you?"

"What will people say?"

"It seems to me that you should care less about other people than about your aunt, and if you are not afraid of displeasing her, what does it matter to you what strangers say?"

"That's true, monsieur, it makes no difference to me; besides, several of my young lady friends have done like that, and they don't find it bad."

"Oh, examples are assuredly not lacking to you. So all being settled, my dear, hold yourself in readiness for tomorrow, at the same hour; I will come here to get you. You will make a parcel of things that are most necessary to you, and I will take you to your new dwelling."

"Very well, since you wish it so; tomorrow I shall be ready."

"Oh, one more question! Who is this M. Jules who was with you at Tivoli?"

"Why, he's a very well-behaved young man, who takes me out walking with my aunt sometimes."

"I believe you; but, were he a hundred times as well-behaved as he is, you must promise not to receive him in your room or to go out walking with him again."

"Don't trouble yourself about that; I know very well that I ought not to do that, and I don't want to vex you in anything."

"You are charming; very well, then, everything is decided."

"Yes, good-by till tomorrow; it is late, we must part."

I took earnest money from Caroline's lips in token of our bargain, and she went off briskly, no doubt to make preparations for the change in her situation. I was then going to "keep" Mademoiselle Caroline. This word "keep" sounded ill in my ears; generally, it pertains to old libertines, ugly or idiotic men, who, having money, endeavor to acquire by its means, the only one at their command, what others more favored than they often obtain without effort. These persons are very rarely loved, and are almost always deceived; I have often been amused at their expense myself. And I was going to "keep" Caroline. No, I was going to settle her in her room, that was all. I should give her now and again some little presents, but she must continue to work; I had no desire to satisfy all her fancies. I was, then, only her lover, not her protector.

One always tries to look at one's actions from the most favorable point of view; besides, Caroline is really pretty, I have already long had a fancy for her, and I am at last to see the crowning of my hopes. I persuaded myself that she loved me, although I had seen nothing in her conduct which could prove it to me; but it is so sweet to delude one's self into the belief that one is capable of inspiring affection. She was a coquette, but I would soon settle that, for she should see no one but me, go out only with me; she would obey my wishes and she would be faithful to me.

The next day, as soon as it was light, I thought of all I had to do, I had no time to lose. I hastily dressed myself, and in closing my door I bumped against my neighbor Raymond, who was coming to see me in his morning jacket.

"Are you going out already?" said he to me.

"Yes, neighbor, I have a good deal to do."

"The devil! I should have liked to talk with you."

"Oh, that will keep for another time."

"You did not come to join me at the Café Turc yesterday; I waited up to ten o'clock in the gardens."

"I am sorry for that. Good-by."

"But tell me, what about my portrait? Has Agathe still got it?"

I listened no longer to Raymond, and before he had finished speaking was at the foot of the staircase. I scoured the neighborhood to find a room; I must have one that she could take possession of at once, and I did not want one that was far from my own. I had not yet found what I wanted, one was too high up, another too dismal or too dirty. I walked along with my head in the air, looking for notices of lodgings to let everywhere. As I paused before an entrance gate I heard someone cough slightly a few paces from me; the cough seeming to me affected, I turned and perceived Nicette. I was within two paces of her shop without suspecting it. Nicette looked

at me, then lowered her eyes; she dared not bow to me or speak to me in broad daylight, poor little thing! I remembered then what I had previously forgotten — her bouquet; I had not yet thanked her for it. I went up to her shop, and as I chose some flowers I told her in a low voice how sensible I was of her kindly remembrance; she colored with pleasure, and I departed, followed by her glances.

Finally, I found in the Rue Caumartin what I wanted; two small rooms, very respectable, very cheerful, which could be taken immediately. It was now only a question of furnishing them, but, having money, nothing was easier. I went to an upholsterer's and bought all that was necessary. I had it sent immediately, and in three hours the little apartment was completely furnished. I had wished at first to buy only what was necessary, but my pride was involved; I wished to give Caroline an agreeable surprise. She must have an easy chair in which she could recline at ease, she must have a sofa on which two could sit, she must have the mirrors necessary to a pretty woman, she must have, above all, a dressing table, and, finally, a good bed, she must have curtains to ward off the curious looks of the neighbors, and she must have double shades to shut out the daylight, she must have a little clock, that one might not become quite oblivious of time while talking of love, and it was always of love that one talked with

Caroline. All these little details amounted to much more than I had wanted to spend at first; but I should try to economize in something else, and these were extraordinary expenses which came but rarely.

At length all was done. I had the keys of the apartment; there was no porter in the house, which was one spy the less. Oh, it is necessary to foresee everything; this evening as Caroline would come to live in this neighborhood, with which she was but little acquainted, I wanted at least to offer her some supper, there must a caterer somewhere about. I quickly went to order a little collation. But before my mistress took possession of her new domicile, had I surely thought of everything? Would she lack anything? I put fifteen louis into the cupboard to subserve her first needs, for in the early moments of her change of fortune she would hardly think of working, and this was very excusable; a young girl's head is so easily turned. But everything had been done, and it seemed to me that if my pretty flower-maker wanted to be sober, settled, and well-conducted, she might make herself very happy.

I went to a caterer's and ordered a delicate supper for nine o'clock. Now I had to try to kill time until the evening; it was dinner time, but I was not hungry. No matter, I should still dine, for that would give me occupation.

It was six o'clock; two hours and a half still

remained, which I felt would be an eternity. I would go for a walk. It occurred to me at that moment that I shouldn't be sorry to meet Raymond and get a little distraction out of him. I would go to the Rue Vivienne, for in that street was situated the milliner's shop where Agathe worked, and Raymond was pretty sure to be prowling in its neighborhood.

As I approached Agathe's shop I saw that a good many people were clustered before a notice pasted at about ten steps from the shop. I did not usually stop to read notices of the sale of goods and chattels — or advertisements of lost dogs; but I saw that everybody was laughing, so it could not be an ordinary announcement. I drew nearer and listened,—

"That's a good joke," said one.

"It's a splendid trick," said another. "I'm sure it is like the original; I recognize that profile."

As I was desirous of seeing it also, I drew near in my turn, and what did I behold? Raymond's silhouette, which some one had pasted on a big sheet of white paper, while beneath it was written in great letters,—

"Notice to dames and damsels: The original of this picture would like to find a person from fifteen to thirty-five years of age, willing to accept a dinner in a private room."

I easily divined who was the author of this piece

Agathe was with her companions at the shop door.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY G. A. WILLIAMS.

[illegible] I felt would be an [illegible] walk. It occurred to me [illegible] wouldn't be sorry to meet R[illegible] distraction out of him. I wo[illegible] Vivienne, for in that street was [illegible] milliner's shop where Agathe work[illegible] Raymond was pretty sure to be prowling [illegible] neighborhood.

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"[illegible]," said one.

"[illegible]," said another. "[illegible] the original; I recognize that [illegible]"

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"[illegible] dames and damsels: The origin[illegible] would [illegible] to find a person fr[illegible] years of age, willing to acc[illegible] author of this [illegible]

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of mischief. Agathe was with her companions at the shop door, and these damsels were laughing till they cried on seeing the crowd which gathered in front of the silhouette, and on hearing the remarks made upon it by different persons. I pitied poor Raymond. Had I dared I would have torn down this picture, which was thus exposed to the laughter of the passers-by. Of course people are hardly ever recognizable in these black profiles, but my neighbor's physiognomy was very singular, and the silhouette artist had, unfortunately for his subject, caught the likeness exactly, in which he had had time to become proficient, since Raymond had passed the entire evening in his shop.

Among the curious crowd I noticed little Friquet, whom one was always certain to find in front of notices, caricature shops, cake stalls, singers in the street, and every kind of open-air spectacle. The small clerk had recognized Raymond; he was doubled up with laughter, and cried,—

"Wait, I know who that is — that's M. Raymond who comes to sing at my aunt's house, oh, yes, it is really him. Oh, how malicious to have pasted that there."

Even while saying, "how malicious," the little sneak repeated every minute or so,—

"I know him, it's M. Raymond, who comes to my aunt's house."

I was about to leave the scene when, turning

round, I perceived Raymond, who was walking by Agathe's shop, doing the amiable and casting sheep's eyes at her, to which she only replied by shouts of laughter.

The unfortunate man was about to pass his portrait; if Friquet saw him he was lost, for the little clerk would not fail to make his identity known to everybody. I wished to try to spare him this mortification. I went hastily up to him, took his arm, and said,—

"Come, my dear Raymond, come along, and we'll go and have some coffee together."

"I can't, my dear fellow! I had a purpose in coming here. I was watching for Agathe, I want to speak to her."

"You can speak to her later on, come on with me!"

"No, not now; the moment appears favorable, she can't take her eyes off me."

In fact, the traitress was pretending, in a manner to make one die with laughter, that she was afraid that he would go away. M. Raymond, who had never seen her look at him like that, and who perceived that all the damsels of the milliner's shop had their eyes on him, felt exhilarated with joy; he dilly-dallied on the street, supporting himself on his stick; in vain I tried to draw his arm within mine; there was no way of getting him out of sight of the milliner's. But he noticed the crowd which had gathered a few steps away.

"There is something the matter over there; let's go and see what it is."

"Pshaw, it's not worth the trouble; it's a reward offered for a lost dog, or an advertisement of some new oil to prevent the hair from turning white or falling out."

"By Jove, my dear fellow! those oils are not to be despised. As to me, I try all that come up. To tell you the truth, they often give me the headache; but to preserve one's youth you can understand that one has to risk something. Besides, I don't think they are looking at anything like that! see how everybody is laughing; it must be something very comical."

"Don't you know that in Paris the slightest trifle will draw a hundred people together?"

"No matter, I must see that; I like to laugh myself when I have the opportunity. I'll tell you presently what it is."

It was impossible to restrain him; he had already sprung across the gutter with a lightness of which I should not have thought him capable, and reached the crowd of curious people, plying his elbows and hands to pass in front of the others. The damsels of the millinery shop did not lose sight of him, and I also witnessed the effect of the silhouette upon him. As he came up to the wall he remained motionless for a moment before his profile, unable as yet to believe his eyes; the little clerk, who had not budged from his point of

vantage, uttered an exclamation on seeing him and, delighted at being able to point him out to all those who were around him, said to him,—

"Here is your portrait, M. Raymond, it looks exactly like you," and all the young men repeated with Friquet, "It is M. Raymond, who comes to my aunt's house."

My neighbor drew his hat down over his eyes in such a way that only the tip of his nose could be seen; he wanted to get away, and he pushed through the loiterers, who took pleasure in barring his passage and overwhelming him with hootings and jocular remarks. Raymond could contain himself no longer; he pushed so strenuously that he scattered the crowd. He walked with long strides, and the shouts of laughter which came from the milliner's shop finished his discomfiture. He was going like the wind, but his hat so covered his eyes that he could see nothing, and he hurled himself against a blind man led by a dog, who held a wooden bowl in his jaws.

Raymond pushed the poor devil, who suddenly sat down, uttering an energetic oath; the dog, seeing his master fall, dropped his bowl and leaped at Raymond. The blind man cried, "Thief!" because he heard his pennies roll on to the pavement; Raymond swore in his turn, for the spaniel was biting his legs. Everybody ran to restore peace and pick up the beggar, but no one dared to go near him, for he was striking from right to

left with his stick, trying to hit the person who had upset him, while Raymond struggled with the dog, who evidently took his leg to be the wooden bowl and refused to let go of it.

At last the blind man was got on his feet; some one managed to get the wooden bowl between the jaws of the faithful animal who wanted to fight for his master. As it was necessary to indemnify the poor devil, who was rubbing himself and calling for his scattered receipts, my neighbor was constrained to fumble in his pockets, while everybody shouted in his ears,—

"Come, M. Raymond, you must be generous, you can't go through the streets of Paris like a madman."

To free himself from the crowd, which at each moment grew larger, Raymond emptied his pockets, but the more he gave the more loudly the blind man complained of his injuries.

"Is the rascal never going to be satisfied?" said my neighbor; "here are twelve francs for your bruises and thirty sous for your receipts; I think that is quite enough."

"You've hurt me," shouted the blind man, turning a deaf ear; "I shan't be able to walk for a week; you must pay me for what I shall lose by that."

"Wait, here are twelve francs more."

"That's not enough, master."

"What! that makes three livres a day, and

you're not satisfied. Yours would seem to be a paying occupation."

"I'm the poor father of a family. I have five children."

"And why doesn't your wife lead you, instead of trusting you to a dog?"

"My wife sings on the Place Maubert, my good monsieur."

"And your children?"

"My eldest sings on the Boulevard des Italiens, my second in the Rue du Grand-Hurler, my third at Montparnasse, my fourth at the Champs-Élysées, and my little youngest is beginning to sing in the Rue du Petit-Lion. We all of us sing, my good monsieur."

"Well, I declare!—and still you complain, people who are singing from morning to night—and who won't accept three livres for a day's pay. I ask you, if there's a more fortunate family in Paris than this one?"

The public laughed at my neighbor's reflection. The blind man, who still wanted to make himself disagreeable, was threatened with being taken before a magistrate to show his wounded parts, that functionary having a regular fixed tariff of damages for all sorts of bruises. The mendicant, not caring to expose his smarts to justice, for fear of a considerable rebate from the balm he had received for them, departed with his dog; Raymond made off, pocketing his affront, and I did the same

with his silhouette, which I tore down and thrust into my pocket.

It was time for me to go in search of Caroline. I took a cab and had myself driven to the back of the Château-d'Eau. There I got out and walked up and down on the boulevard, awaiting my young runaway. This time she did not keep me long; I soon saw her coming with several cardboard boxes in her hand. She smiled as soon as she saw me from afar off; her manners were much freer from restraint and her glances tenderer than any she had bestowed on me before. Oh, I saw well now that her heart was mine.

I led her to the cab; we packed in the boxes and placed ourselves side by side; I told the cabby to whip his horse, for I was in a hurry to get there, and to enjoy her surprise. At length, after a rapid ride, during which she allowed me to clasp her in my arms and tell her that I should always love her, we reached the Rue Caumartin and stopped before the door of her new dwelling.

I opened the street door, paid the cabby; Caroline took her boxes, and I gave her my hand to lead her up the staircase, for it was so dark that one could not see. It astonished me to find that her hand did not tremble in the least as I held it in mine; at this moment of so great a change in her position she was not agitated. She must be a girl of great strength of mind!

At length we were in her home; an old neighbor

gave us a light — Caroline could examine her new domicile. She glanced around with delight, I saw that her eyes were shining with pleasure.

"Oh, how pretty! how pretty it all is!" she kept repeating; and she seated herself first in the easy chair, then on the sofa, went to admire herself at the dressing table; examined her curtains, her desk, her clock, her table, her chairs, in fact, she only avoided looking at the bed — an affectation of modesty, perhaps.

"You are pleased, then?" said I, making her seat herself beside me.

"Why, how can I help being so? This lodging is delightful, everything is so elegant, there is nothing lacking. I shall seem like a woman who is quite well to do."

"You like it here, then?"

"I already feel as if I should never want to leave it."

"I am delighted at my success in pleasing you; all that is here belongs to you."

"To me! really, you are too generous."

"And if you do not love me, you are not obliged to allow me to come here; I don't assume that I have the right to exact anything for what I have done."

"Why, what an idea; if I did not love you do you suppose I would have consented to follow you here? — or that I should have accepted anything from you?"

I did not allow her to say anything further, I stopped her with a kiss. Some one rang loudly; Caroline started in alarm.

"Who can be coming here?" she said to me.

I reassured her, and opened the door. It was the caterer, bringing the supper I had ordered, and the sight of which restored all Caroline's cheerfulness. We laid the cloth; the hamper was unpacked, the dishes placed on the table, the cook's boy sent away. We were alone in our own apartments, free to do as we chose. I had not much appetite, but I saw with pleasure that my companion did honor to the repast; she ate of everything, and found everything good.

"At least," I said to myself, "she is unaffected as yet; she does not try to hide her pleasure or her appetite."

She confessed that she never supped so well at her aunt's, and openly avowed that she loved good cheer, dainties, and muscatel wine, so I poured her out some muscatel. I did not want to make her tipsy, but a little would not fail to banish the constraint which still embarrassed our cheerfulness.

Caroline was witty and original; she had tact — perhaps she had a thought too much of the latter. I foresaw that this young girl might go far and become a reigning beauty. I understood fully that she was bored in the Rue des Rosiers, and that she had secretly desired to shine in a wider sphere

because she divined the success that was awaiting her. I should try as much as possible to avoid flattering her taste for luxury, dress, and the spending of money, for it would be devilish hard later on to stop her on that road.

But the clock struck eleven.

"What, already!" said Caroline; "how quickly the time has passed."

I was beside her. I clasped her in my arms and laid my head upon her shoulder; silence replaced our bursts of merriment, but silence better expresses the emotions of the heart than does the loudest laughter.

"It is very late," repeated Caroline at length, in a whisper.

"Must we part, then?" said I, "and are you not your own mistress?"

She lowered her eyes and said nothing, but had I need of further avowals? In yielding this she had yielded all, and further defence was unnecessary. But oh, Mademoiselle Caroline, my doubts concerning you were fully affirmed; however, I recalled the song,—

The first step is taken without reflection.

But one reflects before taking the second, and I tried to persuade myself that my victory was the greater because of this.

Besides, one must put up with that for which there is no remedy — if I had been her husband — why then I should have had to do the same; for

it is quite enough to know that one is a Georges Dandin, there is no necessity to apprise the world of that fact.

I kept my thoughts to myself, and she swore that she would always love me, could be happy only when with me, would be always faithful, and had no desire but to please me; and I said almost as much to her.

I was up before she was awake; it was barely six o'clock in the morning, and I made my toilet with as little noise as possible and departed, stepping lightly, so as not to wake her, and closed the door softly after me.

What a difference is there between Paris at six o'clock in the morning and Paris at six o'clock in the evening! What quiet reigns in this neighborhood which some hours later will re-echo with the noise of carriages of all sorts, of brilliant cavalcades, shouts of coachmen and lackeys, the humming and buzzing of foot-passengers, and the cries of street merchants. A few milk-women alone animated the scene now. I directed my steps towards the boulevards; how fresh and cool the air, what a delightful walk. I could not resist the desire to stroll down it before the dust and the crowd should have made it the meeting-place of exquisites and fashionably dressed women. I felt besides that the air I was breathing was doing me good, that it was calming my mind, and I was conscious that one could repent at six o'clock in the morning what one had done

at six o'clock in the evening. But the shops were opening and the shopkeepers were spreading out their wares; the porters were sweeping, the blinds were being drawn up, the little working girls were going to buy their ounce of coffee, the old bachelors to buy their rolls, the maids their pot-au-feu, and the old women their little jars of cream. The messenger was going to drink his glass of wine and the cabby his glass of brandy, before settling well down to the day's work. The peasants, who already had done part of theirs, were remounting their donkeys and going back into the country. I then left the boulevard and returned to my own apartments. Three-fourths of the tenants were still sleeping; it was barely half-past seven, and I met only a few servant maids. I hoped my neighbor was not yet awake. Poor Raymond! after the adventure of yesterday evening I expected there would be a great explanation between us. He must be furious with me; for I believed he had sufficient good sense to comprehend now that the damsels of the milliner's shop were laughing at him.

I reached my door, there was something at my keyhole; it was a bouquet from Nicette, already a little wilted, no doubt it had been there since yesterday. My little flower-girl did not forget me; and I, who could have gone at six o'clock in the morning to say good-day to her, had never even thought of her. I hardly ever passed her

shop. Nicette, however, deserved that one should go a little out of one's way to see her; but for some days past I had had so much to do that I had not had time to think of my protégé. I had promised myself, however, to think as little as possible of Nicette, and I believed that this would be best, above all, for her. I wanted her to forget me, for I thought she was sensitive and capable of sincere attachment to one she loved. I concluded, therefore, that I would not go to see her; that that would be wiser, and in time she would forget me. I felt, however, that I should regret her doing so.

I detached the bouquet, and went into my rooms. My apartment also recalled Nicette to my mind and the night we had passed together. That night did not bear much resemblance to the one that had just rolled by, which had not afforded me anything out of the ordinary. I had passed, and no doubt should pass again, many as agreeable as the last; but the nights, alas! were very rare in which a pretty, sensitive girl of sixteen, with charming ways, knew how to make one respect her innocence.

I was not as contented as I should have been. To have won the affections of a charming woman, for Caroline was really adorable, and lost nothing of her beauty in the simplest attire — what more could I desire? Why, I had been deceived so often that it was permissible for me to have some

fears. My new mistress was at least as coquettish as any of my former ones had been, and that in itself was not reassuring, but wherefore should I torment myself in advance? I had resolved, too, to be perfectly impassive and to take events philosophically. Yes, I had so promised myself, but I had not yet been successful in so doing; perhaps with time, when I became a little more habituated to such things, I should arrive at that end, but I had not as yet achieved it. They say one can do anything one wishes, but I believe it is difficult to grow accustomed to that which wounds one's self-esteem.

Some one knocked and came in; it was my portress, Madame Dupont, who brought me a note.

"Let's see that, Madame Dupont, give it to me."

My portress assumed an air of importance and secrecy which greatly amused me. She handed me the paper with a curtsey which was grave with meaning. But I saw that the note was only folded and that it had no envelope, from which I concluded that the good woman was already aware of the contents, and from her manner they must be serious.

"Who gave you this note, Madame Dupont?"

"It was M. Raymond who sent it to you, monsieur."

"My neighbor?"

"Yes, monsieur, and he charged me to take back your answer."

"Well, let's see what he has to say!"

MONSIEUR DORSAN: — A serious explanation must take place between us two on the subject of the dinner of the day before yesterday. The matter can only terminate in the Bois-de-Boulogne, where I shall await you today between twelve and one o'clock, midday. I shall go unattended; do you the same. I believe you too gallant a man to fail to keep this appointment. I shall be near the Porte Maillot. RAYMOND.

I laughed like a madman after reading this note. Madame Dupont, to whom no doubt Raymond had only said that we were going to fight a duel, appeared surprised at my merriment, and asked me what answer she should take.

"Go to him," said I, "and tell my dear neighbor that I shall be prompt at the meeting-place."

My portress, proud of her mission in so important an affair, made me a very ceremonious curtsey and went to bear my answer to Raymond, who was probably waiting in her lodge, where he was swaggering and blustering among the gossips and maids in order that everyone in the house might learn that we had an affair of honor. I must confess that I had not expected so warlike a missive from my neighbor. What weapons should I take? He hadn't so much as mentioned weapons to me; I had an impression that they would be needless; at any rate, I would put my pistols in my pocket. How did I know? I might perhaps have misjudged

Raymond. Besides, madmen have their lucid moments; misers are sometimes prodigally lavish; tyrants have their streaks of kindness; coquettes, their impulses of sincerity; thieves, their scruples of honesty — cowards might also have their moments of valor.

CHAPTER X

A Duel with my Neighbor. An Uninteresting Dissertation

At the appointed hour I was at the place of meeting. The weather being exceptionally fine and the walking delightful, a great number of people had taken advantage of it and the promenaders were very numerous. I could not avoid the reflection that my neighbor Raymond had with his accustomed lack of savoir faire chosen a time and place for his duel where we must inevitably be seen. I was well aware that he was very fond of putting himself in evidence, but it seemed to me that it was quite unnecessary for him to exhibit this particular idiosyncrasy in this case. However, there was no accounting for Raymond, and I questioned whether he would not be capable of measuring the ground for a sanguinary combat in front of a guard house. I concluded to defer my judgment of him and to await his arrival with what patience I could muster.

I reached the Porte Maillot. I did not see Raymond; I would walk about for a bit. I had hardly thought in the morning that before the day was over I should visit the Bois-de-Boulogne and,

above all, visit it alone; Caroline would be astonished at not seeing me again. In fact it was showing very little consideration for her, and if she were exigeant she would have the right to scold me. But I should find a means of making my peace; when one still loves it is very easy to find one; it is only in long-established households and in liaisons of long duration that quarrels cool love, because, then, reconcilement is more difficult.

It was half past one; nobody appeared. O my dear neighbor, was it your intention merely to give me a walk? I can imagine that a good deal of preparation would be necessary to you before you could fight a duel; but since eight o'clock this morning it seems to me you must have had time to make your little arrangements, and to go and inform all your acquaintances that you had an affair of honor. Had he gone to warn the gendarmerie? That has been done sometimes; but no, it was he who had written to me, and he was the injured party.

Poor Raymond! I admit that the affair of the dinner was very bad, and that he must have a grudge against me for it, above all if he believed me also to be the author of the mischief which some one had committed in pasting up his profile in the Rue Vivienne. But why this roundabout way of sending me a challenge by the portress? If it was not his intention to fight he should have come to my apartments to see me. I should have

confessed my faults while laughing at them; for I am not one of those persons who repair the foolish things they have done only by trying to cut the throats of those they have offended. I think it more honorable to frankly avow one's misdeeds, conscious that one can fight later on if the injured party is not satisfied.

Almost two hours had elapsed. I was losing patience, I was tired of walking about; besides the weather was changing, the sky had become obscured, we were going to have a storm, and I had no desire to await it in the wood. The promenaders were already becoming scarce, the horsemen were spurring their steeds, the coachmen were snapping their whips, everybody was hurrying back to the city. I was about to do the same — but who were these three gentlemen coming with great strides towards the wood? I soon recognized the one who was proudly walking at the head as Raymond; he had brought witnesses after telling me he would come alone. No matter; no doubt he would be obliging enough to yield one of them to me; I began to think that it was with the intention of choosing mine for me that he had invited me not to bring one.

The gentlemen approached and I recognized Raymond's witnesses; one of them was the music-mad Vauvert, the other Baron Witcheritche. By Jove! this would be a laughable affair. I ought to have expected that my neighbor would play me

some trick of this kind. Where the devil had he been to look for such witnesses as these. We lacked Friquet only, but I should not be astonished if he were placed on the watch at a little distance, ready to shout to the guard at the first sight of his uncle.

These gentlemen were perspiring; they had had, however, plenty of time to make their way. Apparently they had come late on purpose to have an opportunity to heat themselves on the road. Raymond was as a red as a turkey-cock, Vauvert as pale as a bride, and the baron made such horrible grimaces that one could not see the exact color of his face.

These gentlemen evinced great satisfaction at seeing that I was alone. I was now very sorry that I had not brought a witness, for I had an idea that one would have upset Raymond's plans.

They bowed to me from a distance as soon as they saw me; I did the same, and turning on my heel re-entered the wood I had just left.

"Where are you going to now? Wait for us," shouted Vauvert, who stammered and could hardly speak, he was so agitated. I pretended not to hear, and continued to make my way into the wood. Vauvert ran after me; he caught up with me, and took me by the hand — I felt that he trembled like a hare.

"Where in the world are you going to, my dear fellow; why are you plunging thus into the

wood? You see very well we are going to have a thunderstorm."

"It seems to me that the business which brought us here cannot be finished on the highway — one might just as well choose the Boulevard Saint-Denis for the place of combat."

"My dear fellow! I hope that — besides — "

"As to the storm, that is not likely to embarrass us; on the contrary it will drive away curious people."

While I was talking with Vauvert, I heard my neighbor shouting to him from afar,—

"No compromise, M. Vauvert — no compromise; I do not wish to compromise this matter. I insist upon fighting."

"You hear him," said Vauvert, "he's very much excited. He's terrible when he gets in that state. He has said everywhere that he would have your life or you should have his."

I could not but laugh at Raymond's swaggering and blustering, and I did my best to reassure poor Vauvert, who did not know what to do, for he had never before found himself at a similar picnic. We were at length rejoined by my adversary and Baron Witcheritche, who had on a cocked hat eight inches high, which he had drawn down over his left eye, and which made him look like a roysterer of the Rue Coquenard.

"Monsieur," said Raymond to me, as he came towards me with a martial stride, "I told you that

I should come alone, and it was, in fact, my intention to do so; but in passing through the Palais-Royal I met my friend Vauvert, who was going to purchase some rolls for his luncheon, and on informing him that I had an affair of honor with you he left everything to follow me, and —"

"You mean," interrupted Vauvert, "that you did not tell me a duel was in question, nor where you were taking me, until we were at the barrier; for when you caught sight of me you seized me by the arm without giving me time to pay for my paper."

Raymond pretended not to hear what Vauvert said, and continued,—

"I therefore yielded to his pressing solicitations. Besides, he is as much your friend as mine, and his presence cannot be displeasing to you. As to Baron Witcheritche, we met him at the barrier, going with his wife to dine in the country. I thought it was much better to have two witnesses than one, because I could then yield one to you. M. de Witcheritche left the baroness, who is waiting for him near by, under the trees. He will act as my second and Vauvert as yours, if that will be agreeable to you."

The baron, who had bowed every time his name was pronounced, came and placed himself at Raymond's side, and Vauvert stationed himself behind me.

"Monsieur Raymond," said I in my turn, "it

seems to me we might very well have settled this affair between ourselves, without troubling these gentlemen. I fear the baroness may get wet during our combat, and I think Vauvert would be much better at his office than here."

"Yes, that is true," said Vauvert, who wished nothing better than to get away. "I have a good deal of business on hand today, and I'm afraid of being reprimanded by our sub-chief."

"The baroness is not at all afraidt of a tunder storm, she lufs to vatch the leedle flashes of lighdning," said Baron Witcheritche, smiling very graciously, and so broadly that his mouth was open to his ears.

"Well, since these gentlemen have come, we must not let them have their trouble for nothing," said I, smiling in my turn, "I accept M. Vauvert for my second."

Vauvert recoiled with an affrighted air.

"Don't agitate yourself," said I, "the seconds rarely have to fight; if, however, I should be killed, and you wish to avenge me, you can do as you please about that."

"Me! my dear fellow, there's no need for me to tell you how great a regard I have for you — and certainly — I wish that this could be amicably settled. Between friends is it necessary to show so much vindictiveness? M. de Witcheritche, we ought not to allow these gentlemen to fight."

The baron seemed more occupied with some-

thing that he had in his pocket than in our combat, and it was in vain that Vauvert, with tears in his eyes, endeavored to make him understand that they must reconcile me with Raymond. But my neighbor was inexorable.

"I mean to fight," said he, "no one can offend me with impunity. I have seen M. Gerville, and I know that he did not dine with you and Agathe — as you told me he did. And my silhouette on the wall — that was an abuse of confidence. You must give me satisfaction, M. Dorsan, for that affair has been noised abroad."

"Well, good heavens! neighbor, here am I at your service. Let us terminate this matter, for it is going to rain and I should be very sorry to have these gentlemen get wet, to say nothing of the baroness, who is under the trees."

"Being the offended party, I have the choice of weapons."

"That is correct."

"I am an adept with the sword. I have taken lessons from the first master in the capital; but I shall fight only with pistols, for I don't wish to take advantage of my superior skill."

"That's generous on your part. I had divined your intention and have brought some pistols."

I drew my pistols from my pocket; I saw that M. Raymond was uneasy, for he changed color; then he drew from his pocket a great pair of horse pistols, which he presented to me.

"That will do very well," said I, "we will each use our own."

"Not at all! not at all! put yours back in your pocket; mine must serve us both. You must feel that I should have too much advantage, your pistols are at least two inches shorter than mine."

"Your conduct is most handsome. Come, then, since you wish it."

"Yes, monsieur; besides, I have the choice of arms, and I will fight only with my own pistols."

"So be it, call these gentlemen to load them."

I turned to look for Vauvert, who, since we had had the pistols in our hands, had gone to walk beside the highway, and with some trouble induced him to come nearer to us.

"The pistols are loaded," said Raymond; "I always take care of that in advance."

"Ordinarily, my dear neighbor, the seconds should undertake that duty."

"Oh, I would not trust anyone to do that but myself. Besides, my friend De Witcheritche has examined them. Is not that so, baron?"

The baron was wrapping in double paper some little neufchatel cheeses which he feared that the rain would cause to melt in his pocket, and which appeared to distress him so much that he only responded to my neighbor's interrogation with a smile of affirmation.

All that I saw confirmed my suspicions. Raymond's valor was not natural. His obstinacy in

refusing to use any but his own pistols, the pains he had taken to load them himself at home — all that covered some trick, the nature of which I wished to discover. He presented his pistols to me, begging me to choose one.

"How many paces apart do you intend we shall stand?" said I to him.

"Why, twenty-five paces."

"Good God!" cried Vauvert. "Why that is breast to breast. Forty paces, gentlemen, that's quite near enough to get hit."

"Thirty paces is all that I can allow. M. de Witcheritche, will you measure the ground?"

The baron regretfully left his cheeses, depositing them on the grass and carefully putting his cocked hat over them, for the rain was now beating violently down. He came towards us, I placed myself; he measured off the ground with giant strides, I could hardly see Raymond. As for my second, he was so frightened lest one of us should hit him, that he did not know where to station himself. He advised us to be careful and make sure of our aim; I reassured him, and M. de Witcheritche gave the signal, beating time as if he was directing one of Haydn's quartets.

Raymond discharged his weapon, and the noise, or fear, caused Vauvert to tumble over in the grass, where he lay face to the ground. As to me, I was untouched; I had not even heard the ball whistle in my ears.

I offered my neighbor to let it remain there.

"No, no, fire!" he cried to me.

"He's a Zæsar!" said the baron, who admired Raymond's courage.

I wanted to assure myself of the truth. My second was stretched at full length on the ground; M. de Witcheritche judged it prudent to take up his post at some distance, behind a clump of trees. My adversary turned his head, waiting for me to aim at him, which I had no desire to do, although I was persuaded that the weapons were not dangerous; but the baron's cheeses lay not two paces from me and I discharged my pistol at them. The explosion lifted the cocked hat and a wad of paper was deposited on the cheeses. While I was laughing at my deed, Raymond came towards me, holding out his hand, and shouting to me as soon as he was within speaking distance,—

"That's settled, my dear fellow! I am satisfied; let us shake hands."

"What!" I said to him, "don't you want to begin again? I have weapons also."

"No, my dear fellow! let us forget all about it, I beg of you; come, embrace me."

"Very well, I'll do anything that's agreeable to you."

While my neighbor threw himself into my arms, the baron ran to get his cheeses, and seemed petrified on seeing them peppered with tiny scraps of paper.

"These cheeses have been under fire, evidently," said he, smelling them.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times, baron; but not wishing to aim at Raymond I fired on that side, and it seemed to me that the ball penetrated them."

M. Raymond became red up to his ears. My mocking expression caused him to fear that I had divined his little trick, but I had no desire to deprive him of the pleasure of being able to say everywhere that he had fought a duel. I ran to my second, who was still on the ground; I invited him to get up, but he did not budge. I saw that the poor fellow had fainted during our combat, and called Raymond to our aid. The latter had about him a phial of thieves' vinegar, with which we mopped Vauvert's face, and he finally became conscious. After being rubbed and receiving the assurance that he was not wounded, he tried to make us believe that his indisposition was due to the attachment he bore for both of us. We thanked him and set him up on his legs; but we were each obliged to support him by the arms to enable him to walk, for he was quite incapable of standing up without our support.

M. de Witcheritche put the débris of the cheeses into his handkerchief, and we left the wood. It continued to rain, but my second could not go fast, and we came in for the full benefit of it.

Raymond had resumed his cheerfulness, and

appeared delighted with his day's work. He understood Vauvert, and knew that his duel would soon be a new topic of conversation to the whole circle of amateurs, even though he did not trouble to relate it everywhere himself.

"You showed immense courage, gentlemen," said Vauvert, as we walked along, "such coolness, such presence of mind — it was valor itself."

"Yes, yes, these two gentlemen are courageous."

"Oh, my neighbor Raymond is not like anybody else; I am sure that he would have fought ten times a day in the same way."

Raymond bowed, but he did not speak. I think he perceived that I knew how he had loaded his pistols.

At length we came up to the baroness, seated under a big tree. Her husband hastened to take her arm, and we proceeded towards the barrier.

"I'm ver' hungry," said Madame de Witcheritche to her spouse.

"Ve vill go und gidt our tinner."

The couple took leave of us and doubled their pace. I thought they were looking for a restaurant where they could be accommodated; but I noticed two big dogs had followed the baron from the barrier, he vainly trying to drive them away.

"Do those two dogs belong to Baron de Witcheritche?" said I to Vauvert.

"No, I think not; I've never seen him with anything but pug dogs."

"It's very singular how they follow the baron," remarked Raymond; "he must have something in his pocket that attracts them."

I looked for a carriage, but the rain had put them all in requisition. We had entirely lost sight of M. Witcheritche and his wife when we heard a great shouting; soon we perceived the two dogs flying towards us and holding in their jaws, one, a bologna sausage, and the other a piece of boiled fat bacon. The baron and baroness were running at the top of their speed after the dogs, shouting,—

"Stop, stop, tief! The wretched animals are carrying off our tinner!"

The baroness, whose strength was not equal to that of her husband and whose breath was entirely gone, was obliged to stop, and she pantingly told us how the two dogs had stolen from the baron's pocket the dinner which he had counted on eating in the country with his dear wife, who had planned this little festival for some time past.

While we were consoling the poor woman, M. de Witcheritche, who was not the man to abandon his bologna and his dearly loved fat salt pork, ran after the dogs, recklessly hurling all the stones at them that he found on his way. He had already wounded one of the animals, he hoped to reach the other, which was about pass the barrier, and threw at him with all his might a large pebble that he had picked up. But the stone was so badly aimed that instead of hitting the dog it

almost put out a toll clerk's eye, just as he was looking up at the sky to see if the weather was likely to clear. The poor man fell, crying,—"I am killed!" His comrades came running. One of the dogs, who was then passing within the city limits, threw himself between the legs of an officer and tumbled him over. The second dog, eager to escape, was stopped by the baron, who had eyes only for his dinner, and followed it without a thought for anything else that was taking place. He managed to seize the animal by its tail, and a combat ensued between man and dog, for the latter refused to loose his hold of the bologna. The soldiers came running from the guard-house at the shouts of the clerks. The light carriages that were going out or coming in were obliged to stop, the wagons could not proceed; the soldiers would let nobody pass before they knew what was the matter and the crowd increased, for people came running to see what was going on, making many conjectures as they came.

"It is an important prisoner whom they have just arrested as he was trying to leave the city," said one, "and it seems he has wounded the officers who have taken him."

"Nothing of the kind; they discovered some dutiable articles in one of these carriages."

In the midst of this tumult, which was still further augmented by the barking of the dogs, the baron cried in a victorious voice,—

"I've got the dogs, I've caught the dogs!" and he waved the bologna, which he had wrenched from the jaws of his adversary, in the air; then, before the poor wretch from whom he had snatched it could turn on him, M. de Witcheritche slipped through the crowd and rejoined his wife, leaving the officers, the soldiers, and the curious onlookers asking each other what had been the matter. The baroness had regained her husband, Vauvert was sufficiently recovered to walk alone, Raymond began to endeavor to appear pleasing — I parted from them and got into a cabriolet which took me to Paris.

My duel and what had ensued had prolonged my absence, and I did not get to Caroline's until past five; she scolded me for going out without awakening her, and said she had been very anxious about me. I should have much preferred that she should have felt lonely, but I presume she had not had leisure; one has a thousand things to do in a new lodging, besides the necessary purchases. She showed me a very elegant bonnet she had bought, and tried it on again that I might see how she looked in it. The bonnet was charming; besides at twenty, with a pretty face and graceful appearance, one may wear a sugar-loaf and still look well; it seemed to me, however, that I liked her better in her little cap than in a bonnet — but I shall stop there.

The rest of the toilet must correspond with the

bonnet; that was a matter of course. The importance women give to all those chiffons, all those trifles they call ornaments strikes me with admiration. How much reflection, calculation, they put into the manner of placing a ribbon or a flower; with what care they arrange a trimming, a bouquet, a ringlet of hair. These things are sometimes the fruit of the meditation of several days. But come, there is nothing criminal in all this — it is only to attract us that they thus array themselves; we should be ungrateful indeed were we to criticise what is done to please us.

Caroline was already changed; she wore the new adornments with much ease; she was no longer the grisette of the Rue des Rosiers, but the modish woman of the Chaussée-d'Antin. Women adapt themselves to change in everything much more rapidly than we of the other sex. Take a country man, for instance; after three months' stay in the city he is still clumsy, awkward, heavy; but the little country girl who only left the fields a week ago would not be recognized by her relations now, and in a very short time she will no longer recognize her relations.

A fortnight had passed since Caroline had come to live in her little apartment in the Rue Caumartin. I saw her every day; I dare not say that it was love I experienced for her, — at any rate, it was not a very passionate love, still, she pleased me as much as at first. I believed that she loved

me more than she had done in the beginning of our connection, she told me so at least.

Things had not turned out precisely as I had planned, for she no longer went to the shop, nor did she work much at home; instead, she had assumed the manners of the fashionable world, the tone of a lady, the dress and bearing of a woman of fashion. It is true that I refused her nothing, and this after resolving to curtail my expenses. But how can one refuse anything to a pretty woman who entreats you in a touching voice, and who, while entreating, looks at you in a certain manner? As to me, I confess that I had not the strength to resist her blandishments; this was perhaps unfortunate for me.

I began to find out that what I denominate as finery is an important item when one is "keeping" a woman. I ruined myself with trifles; every day it was a gown, a fichu, a shawl, a bonnet. I don't know how Caroline reckoned, but she always made out to me that it was the fashion, and therefore necessary to her; and I was too just to refuse anything necessary to a woman. But my income did not suffice; I had to borrow, to run into debt. What would it be should she take a fancy to things that were superfluous to her.

Every two days, on going to my rooms, I found a bouquet at my door. My little Nicette did not forget me, though I never went to see her; if I passed by her shop it was without remembering

that it was there — without even glancing at it. However, every time I found her bouquet I resolved to go and thank her; but Caroline gave me so much occupation that I had not a moment free. Every day there was some pleasure jaunt which I never had the courage to refuse her; she knew how to make me approve all her plans. Her grace charmed me, her wit led me away, her gayety amused me; the hussy knew so well how to use the gifts nature had bestowed upon her.

One morning I received a note in a handwriting which was strange to me. It was from Madame de Marsan, reproaching me in friendly fashion for not keeping my promise to go to her musical evenings and inviting me to a little fête that she was about to give at her country house. I had almost forgotten Madame de Marsan, for I often forget by morning the one who has charmed the evening before; this is extremely fortunate when one is so easily charmed, and shows that the heart has not much to do with the follies we call love. I determined to go to this fête, for I did not wish that Mademoiselle Caroline should make me lose sight of all my acquaintances; I could not shun the society to which I was accustomed because she could not go into it with me. This young girl had already made me commit a thousand follies. There was my sister, for instance, whose letter I had not answered, and who was expecting to see me day after day. I was not at all satisfied with myself,

but the torrent was drawing me on; I let myself go and closed my eyes.

Some one came into my room. It was my neighbor; I had not seen him since the day of our famous duel. He was fully conscious that I had not been deceived by his false bravery, for had I not witnessed his fright on the day of the dinner at the Meridien. I knew that he had made a great noise about his prowess in speaking of his duel to everybody, but he had avoided meeting me in society; my presence would have restricted him in the recital of his deeds of valor. I wondered what M. Raymond wanted of me.

"Good-day, my dear fellow — how goes the health this morning?"

"Why, I think it is going too quickly. I'm leading it a great pace."

"You must be prudent, neighbor?"

"I advise you to talk about that, M. Raymond. And how do you get along with Agathe?"

"Oh, I don't see her at all now; that's all done with, broken off forever. I don't want to have any more to do with these little jades. One spends an enormous amount of money on them — and sometimes gets nothing in return for it. They don't know how to appreciate a man — they don't make any distinction between a poet and a hod-carrier. Provided that one has money in his purse and can stuff them from morning to night with bon-bons, dainties, ices and syrups, tells them they

are adorable, drives them in a carriage to the play or to the country, finally, buys them all the finery they crave — by Jove, that's enough for them. One may be, as to anything else, as stupid as a goose, as coarse and unmannerly as a street porter, or as foppish as an Italian opera singer, and one is no less charming in the eyes of these damsels."

"There is an immense amount of truth in all that you say, neighbor, but generally it is adulation, flattery, which spoils men and women; if we didn't put ourselves at their feet, they could not look down on us from such a height. Flatterers, toadies, vulgar fawners slip in everywhere, and sometimes corrupt the most natural happiness. Kings are, unfortunately, more than any other people, surrounded by a servile tribe who drum in their ears an incessant chorus of praise and mawkish compliments; it is when they fear the most that men abase themselves the lowest. Louis XI had more toadies than Louis XII, Charles IX more flatterers than Henri IV; Richelieu, Mazarin could not take a single step without being surrounded by a fawning crowd, who feared them, who trembled before them, and who humiliated themselves before them and wrote verses in praise of them; Sully and Colbert had admirers, but they knew how to repulse flatterers, they were too great to surround themselves with people whom they despised. If too frequent homage did not augment man's vanity, if the

habit of being praised did not give us too much confidence as to our own merits, how many mistakes would have been avoided by those heroes, those great captains who in difficult circumstances have rejected the advice of the wisest men because, being used only to the language of flattery, they believed themselves invincible. Had not a thousand voices repeated it to them? And they who were thus raised to the rank of demigods could not easily allow themselves to listen to the advice of those who were subservient to them.

"The pernicious effects of flattery were proved at a very early date; it was by flattering her that the serpent seduced the first woman. And it is nearly always by this same means that men and women since that time have been betrayed to their ruin. Flattery destroyed Antiochus and Nebuchadnezzar, Semiramis and Marie Stuart, Cinq-Mars, Monmouth, Cleopatra, and Marion Delorme. Samson allowed his hair to be cut off while listening to Delilah's compliments; Holofernes let them cut off his head while lending ear to the sweet nothings uttered by Judith; Charles XII, blinded by his victories, ingulfed his armies in the plains of Pultowa; the Marechale de Villeroi, counting always on victory, insisted on giving battle at Ramillies.

"Praise, by blinding us to our grossest defects, causes us to remain in the path of mediocrity when nature has given us the means of rising above the vulgar herd; by making us close our ears to

severe but truthful advice, it allows us to mistake self-esteem for genius, vanity for merit, facility for talent.

"How many artists in asking for advice desire only compliments in return, being convinced that all their works are masterpieces and that no one can find any flaws in them. Some people who have made a name will no longer take the trouble to study, believing that everything which comes from their hand will be perfect. But civility does not always allow us to say what we think; a poet reads his verses to us; if they are bad, we cannot tell him so — at least, not if we wish to remain his friend; for no one wishes to be an Alcestis in society, criticising and ridiculing everyone; this rôle would make us too many enemies, one can sustain it only on the stage. In society, people prefer to mutually pass over their faults instead of censuring those of others. The intercourse of life is sweeter, and one would much rather try to do what one can for one's self than waste his time in trying to correct others. However, if politeness compels us to choose our words, it does not oblige us to say what we think. When I hear detestable verses read I am silent, but I do not declare them charming, I even try to gather courage to make some reflections upon the authors.

"I never take it upon myself to say that a portrait bears any resemblance to its subject when that resemblance is lacking; I cannot say to anyone

that he sings well when he is scorching my ears. It is necessary, above all, to be sparing of praise with budding talents, even while encouraging them; flattery has blighted a great number, often arresting the flight of a genius which, thinking itself already perfect, will no longer take the trouble to acquire what is necessary to it. A father is no doubt pardonable in thinking his son a prodigy of beauty, of wit, and of talent, paternal love is easily deceived; but one should at least keep one's opinion to one's self and not force strangers to go into ecstacies over a mischievous trick, or to listen in religious silence to an oft-told fable often entirely opposed to common sense, and to remain lost in admiration of blear eyes, flat nose, and long, sharp chin, which are only charming to the eyes of parental affection.

"If there were fewer flatterers, how many people would adorn society who are now insupportable because they have been spoilt. If people would only reserve their enthusiasm for poets and artists whose talent has raised them to a height where eulogy cannot injure them. No doubt the contemporaries of Molière, of Voltaire, rendered to these sublime geniuses the homage they deserved, but it was not by insipid compliments, by false praises, that they evinced their admiration for such men; highly talented men are proud of the approbation of people of taste, but they despise the unmeaning adulation of which fools are so vain.

"When Voltaire lived at Ferney the travellers who by their rank or their merit could hope to be admitted to see him never failed, although such a visit might cause them to come far out of their way, to go to the philosopher's retreat, each one being curious to see this extraordinary man, who had astonished the world by his genius. The men of intellect and taste thought only of the pleasure they were about to enjoy, but the stupid people, many of whom also wished to chat with Voltaire, were thinking in advance of the figure they could make in the presence of the philosopher in order the better to prove their admiration to him. Voltaire was pleasant with the former, but when a lady, on perceiving the great poet, thought fit to utter exclamations and to be quite overcome, the philosopher shrugged his shoulders and turned his heels on her.

"Great geniuses are rare, highly talented people are amiable and modest; those who might have acquired talent and who have lagged behind welcome with delight the incense which is poured out upon them. Why should not this young man whose voice is merely agreeable fancy himself to be a Mario, a Martin, after the extravagant admiration his hearers have evinced for him? They press him, they entreat him, they beg him to sing; all the women are enraptured before they have heard him, they praise him beforehand to their neighbors. His singing is delightful! charming!

divine! These are only the words which come to the ear of the amateur who deigns at length to yield to the wishes of the assembly, and after all the customary grimaces to sing in a very mediocre manner a song of which it is understood that he will not pronounce the words so as to be heard, and which is not finished before the chorus of praises begins again, while the impartial auditor, who had expected something very different, asks himself if he can believe his ears.

"I assure you, my dear neighbor, that I have never taken upon myself to swell the crowd which presses around these prodigies of society, in whom I have found nothing but an excessive conceit, nor to augment the number of the adorers of a woman whom it is the fashion to admire, and whose coquetry is carried to such a length that I can only blush for her and for those who surround her. To be sure, I am as fond as any one else of a pretty woman, I am the first to offer homage to her grace; but must I incessantly raise her to the skies, overwhelm her with compliments, which even if they do not outrage good taste must at least prove wearisome to the recipient? Can she not take a step without my praising her carriage, her figure, her walk, her foot, her grace? Can she not smile without my going into ecstacies over her teeth, her mouth, the expression of her eyes? Can she not utter a word without my admiring her wit, her tact, her penetration, and the sweet tone of her

voice? I may think all those things, but I do not say them, I should be afraid of making the person whom I addressed blush. I know that I am thought rather ungallant, which perhaps injures me in the estimation of some of those ladies, but I neither can nor will change; if every one acted as I do, perhaps we should see less fatuity and pretension in men, less coquetry and moods in women; people would take more trouble to be amiable and to please, and everybody would gain thereby. What do you think about it, neighbor?"

I saw that my neighbor was no longer listening to me; he had gone to examine the bouquets of orange blossoms which adorned my mantelpiece, and appeared to look somewhat curiously at the old ones, which I had gathered together on my bureau, after picking out the flowers which were decaying.

"It seems to me that you are fond of orange blossoms," remarked Raymond, at length.

"Immensely so."

"They have a delightful perfume; you must have twenty bunches of them there."

"I haven't counted them; but will you not kindly inform me what has procured me the honor of this visit? For I suppose you had some object in coming here?"

"That's true; I had forgotten it in looking at these bouquets. I have received an invitation from Madame de Marsan for a fête she is giving

in the country the day after tomorrow; I presume you are going also, and I came to propose to you that we should go down together."

"I willingly accede to that; you know the way, you will be my guide."

"With great pleasure; but how shall we go?"

"We can hire a carriage to take us at any hour you like."

"That will do very well. I had at first thought of going on horseback. I'm very fond of horse-exercise. I flatter myself I have a good seat."

"I don't doubt that you are a graceful equestrian; but we could not go to Madame de Marsan's fête in boots, so we can't very well go on horseback."

"That is correct; well, I'll undertake to get a good carriage, I know some one who rents them. At what time shall we start?"

"At seven o'clock; we shall then arrive there at eight, which is the proper time for the country."

"Then, that is settled; I think we shall manage to amuse ourselves. I know all the people who will be there, and I'll make you acquainted with them."

"I don't believe you've been to Madame de Marsan's more than twice yourself."

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it; when once I know anybody — why I have a little tact, penetration, we soon get used to each other. In case they want to play a comedy I have an opera

I am going to finish and I'll read it to you on the way."

"That will give me great pleasure."

"I'll go and look it over. On Tuesday then, neighbor."

"On Tuesday!"

Raymond left me, and I went in search of Caroline. I saw her at the window; for some days past she had sat there very often, above all when she was alone. No doubt she did so that she might see me coming from afar. It seemed to me she was even more amiable, more cheerful, more provoking than usual; her eyes shone with pleasure. I was sure she loved me, really loved me; her mind was grateful, her heart sensitive; she was coquettish only to please me. She had wanted to become attached only to one who was worthy of her love; her heart singled me out. I was sure she would be faithful to me. I had known all along that with a little patience I should find a faithful woman.

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